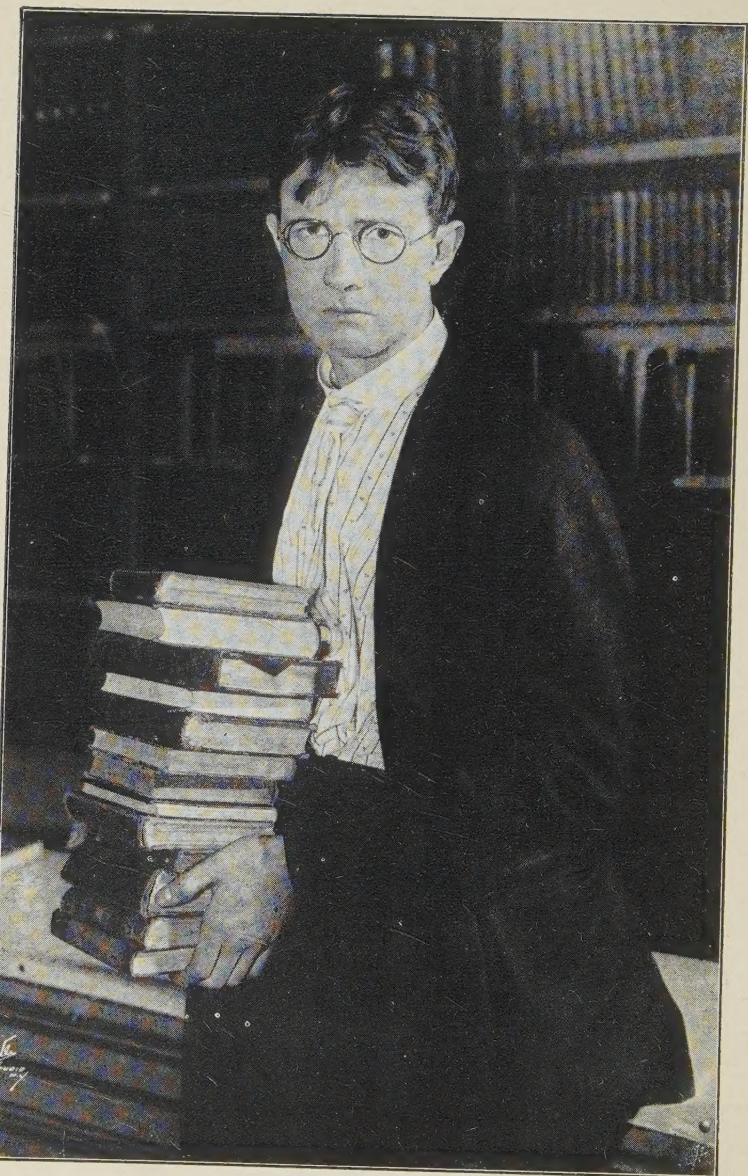


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THE POOR NUT

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

*As produced by Patterson McNutt at
Henry Miller's Theatre, New York City
April 27th, 1925*

BY
J. C. NUGENT
AND
ELLIOTT NUGENT

Authors of "Kempy" etc.

PREFACE BY
DON MARQUIS



SAMUEL FRENCH

Incorporated 1898

T. R. EDWARDS, Managing Director
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PREFACE

"THE POOR NUT," and the general type of play of which it is representative, belong to a class of art which could never have been produced in any country and any era but the America of here and now. I insist on the word Art, and I make the statement deliberately and sweepingly, in the hope of arousing the anger of whatever high-brow may read. The play is spirited, amusing, jolly, wholesome, and it has a happy ending. And how a certain type of high-brow critic and his followers loathe the word wholesome! How they hate and condemn the happy ending! They believe and they preach that nothing that is wholesome or happy can possibly be Art; nothing that is happy or wholesome can possibly have any relation to Life.

For they have been instructed about Art and Life by the European masters, and they are so essentially provincial that they insist that the American craftsman must imitate the European masters; he must always find Life as discouraging as the most melancholy Scandinavian or Russian of them all, or he is not real, he is not honest—he is not Significant. (Significant and Important are the great words!) Anything joyous must be untrue and trivial, any episode that is triumphant and unclouded must falsify existence; there must be defeat somewhere, there must be the sense of shadow encroaching upon even the lighter moods and moments, there must be at least the appre-

hension of failure or unfulfillment in affairs spiritual or material,—or else a lie has been uttered in the teeth of the Cosmos and an insult has been offered to the Norns. Even in comedy, we must feel Urth, Verthandi, and Skuld in the background, looking askance at human endeavorings for a space of light-hearted happiness, and smiling cynically at the human hope that there has been or is or can be anything continually fortunate and victorious in the past, present or future of any individual. Such is the creed of the unintelligent bone-heads who refer to each other as the *intelligencia*.

They are wrong, and they are stupidly wrong. The European masters are honest—they have represented the life about them truly, they have been faithful to its letter and its spirit; I do not doubt it; and what they have seen and felt and responded to these many decades has been, when it has been more than superficial, predominantly hopeless. For the common man of Europe, millions and millions of him, has been in a devil of a mess in one way or another for scores of years, for centuries. The immigrants who come hither will truly tell us as much, even if we do not read the literature of the masters.

The discovery of many honest American writers of the past century is that life is not hopeless in America for the common man. I know that there are thousands, hundreds of thousands, even millions, in America affected by poverty, and disease, and social and industrial injustice, and victimized by many oppressions, and denied the fulfilment of the promises made by the optimistic founders of the republic—but I also know, and you know too, if you are honest about it, that here

and now in America for the great majorities of the ordinary inhabitants there really does exist the fuel and food for such hopefulness as nowhere exists in Europe, and there exists a spirit of hopefulness generally that is not found there. In short, the blither and more victorious outlook upon life and its problems spiritual and material which has been adopted by certain of our popular American writers is justified by the life which they find about them.

The false thing, the inartistic thing, the unreal thing, would be to suppress the utterance of this more optimistic mood in American life. The outlook upon heaven and earth on this continent is different, and the artist who fails to respond to such differences is not honest. I am not saying that life in America does not have its sordidness, its tragedies of disillusionment, its ghastly frustrations, its terrors for the sensitive and discerning soul, its problems of maladjustment and wickedness, its martyrdoms and tyrannies and crucifixions, its failures and despairs and futilities and perversions, its grotesqueries and ironies, its acrid comedies, its lacerating stupidities, its lies and defeats, its humours too bitter for either tears or laughter. But I do say that there exist, besides all this, great wide stretches of life played upon and suffused with a cheerful native sunlight of hopefulness and success; and that these stretches also are legitimate settings for stories and dramas that need not be untrue because they are not unhappy.

The contribution of this play is that it shows several millions of American young men and women, from Maine to Oregon, at a glance, living joyously and youthfully in the midst of this fortunate environment

and breathing and floating in this atmosphere, and shows them truly, and with an understanding that is both penetrating and genial. It is not uncritical of their obvious faults, but it does not falsify their essential spirit. The particular problems of the hero are in themselves a criticism of the life in which he finds himself; it would have been possible to predicate the same set of facts and turn the story into a soul's tragedy—but it would have been no truer to the things that are. Personally, I like it better for not ending with a vista of wreck and ruin, or having anywhere in it the suggestion of the corpse of an illegitimate baby carried out in the ash-can.

DON MARQUIS.

HENRY MILLER'S THEATRE

124 West 43d Street

HENRY MILLER, Manager

E. & M. THEATRE CORPORATION

WEEK BEGINNING MONDAY EVENING, APRIL 27, 1925

Matinees Thursday and Saturday

PATTERSON McNUTT

Presents

“THE POOR NUT”

A Comedy of Modern Youth

By J. C. NUGENT and ELLIOTT NUGENT

(Authors of “Kempy”)

—with—

ELLIOTT NUGENT

Staged by Howard Lindsay

CHARACTERS

(In order of their first appearance)

“COLONEL” SMALL.....*Joseph Dailey*

MARGERIE BLAKE.....*Norma Lee*

JOHN MILLER.....*Elliott Nugent*

JULIA WINTERS.....*Florence Shirley*

"SPIKE" HOYT.....	<i>Grant Mills</i>
"HUB" SMITH.....	<i>Beach Cooke</i>
"MAGPIE" WELCH.....	<i>Percy Helton</i>
COACH JACKSON.....	<i>John Webster</i>
"WALLIE" PIERCE.....	<i>Cornelius Keefe</i>
PROFESSOR DEMING.....	<i>Wright Kramer</i>
"DOC" SPURNEY.....	<i>Thomas Shearer</i>
A FRESHMAN.....	<i>Joseph Mitchell</i>
WISCONSIN OFFICIAL.....	<i>Robert Scott</i>
REGGIE.....	<i>Margaret Fitch</i>
BETTY.....	<i>Jean Mann</i>
DORIS.....	<i>Frances Bavier</i>

Ohio State Students, Wisconsin Students

Runners

Wisconsin—Gavin O'Rourke, Frank Subers, Hamilton Ward.

Ohio State—Roger Briner, Lester Nielsen.

ACT I.

The University Book Store.

ACT II.

SCENE 1—The Trainer's Tent, Athletic Field. (Next Day.)

SCENE 2—Official Boxes, corner of the Stadium.

ACT III.

Living Room "Psi Sigma" House. (That Night.)

THE POOR NUT

CAST

COLONEL SMALL	Proprietor of the University Bookstore
MARJORIE BLAKE.....	A college girl
JULIA WINTERS.....	A Wisconsin co-ed
JOHN MILLER.....	"Our Hero"
"HUB" SMITH.....	A student
"MAGPIE" WELCH.....	The cheer-leader
"SPIKE" HOYT.....	Captain of Wisconsin track team
WALLIE PIERCE...	Captain of Ohio State track team
PROFESSOR DEMING.....	Of the Botany Department
COACH JACKSON.....	The track coach
DOC SPURNEY.....	The Trainer
THE OFFICIAL STARTER	
A FRESHMAN	
BETTY	}.....Girls at the dance, Act III
REGGIE	
HELEN	
TWO OHIO RUNNERS	}.....In the race, Act II
THREE WISCONSIN RUNNERS	
A CROWD OF "ROOTERS"	
OFFICIAL ANNOUNCER (<i>Offstage</i>)	

ACT ONE

The University Bookstore. June.

ACT TWO

Scene 1. The trainer's tent, Athletic Field. Next day.

Scene 2. The track in front of a corner of the stadium. Five minutes later.

ACT THREE

Living room, Psi Sigma House. That night.

THE POOR NUT

ACT ONE

The interior of the University Bookstore in Columbus, Ohio. A somewhat shallow set, with high shelves of books at the back and down the right side. Sections labelled "English," "French," "Spanish," "Italian," "Chemistry," "Mathematics," "Philosophy," "Psychology," etc.

In the left upper corner a door, outside of which is a vestibule backing, and below the door a large window, with the letters "University Bookstore" painted on the outside, reversed within. This window is covered with "Bon Ami" (whitewash) used in window cleaning, except the lower foot or two, so that little is visible beyond, except the legs of people as they enter the room or leave.

There is a long counter up center in front of the shelves, with a cash register at the Right end. In the Right wall a door up Right leading to the rear room of the store.

(Note: "Right" and "Left" refer to the position of the stage facing the audience.)

Displays of fountain pens, ink, pencils, rulers, maps, drawing instruments, etc.

Down Right Center, a trap door and ladder leads to the cellar. The trap is closed.

COLONEL SMALL, a gruff old fellow, with metal-rimmed glasses, and an iron-bound disposition, is behind the counter up C. while the FRESHMAN below the counter is fumbling in his pockets for some money. The FRESHMAN wears a tiny skull cap of gray and red.

SMALL (*gruffly*)

Well, have you got it?

FRESHMAN (*producing a half dollar*)

Yes, here it is.

[*Hands it to SMALL.*]

SMALL

Thank you.

[*Rings up cash register.* MARJORIE BLAKE, a pretty, sweet, and quiet-mannered little bobbed-haired co-ed, enters from street door, speaks cheerily, as FRESHMAN turns and meets her.

FRESHMAN

Hello, Margie.

MARGIE

Oh, hello, Norrie. (FRESHMAN goes out through street door, carrying book.) Good afternoon, Colonel Small.

SMALL

Oh, what can I do for you?

MARGIE

I'm ready to work this afternoon, if you want me.

SMALL (*sharply*)

Work? What at? Who sent you? If it's that employment bureau, get out—the last girl couldn't read. Can you read?

MARGIE

Why, yes—I'm a Junior at the University.

SMALL

That don't prove nothin'.

MARGIE

I'm studying to be a librarian. I'm Marjorie Blake, from Professor Griggs' class. I thought he had it all arranged with you for me to work here three afternoons a week.

SMALL

Oh, yes. Professor Griggs, eh? Thought you weren't coming till Monday, but I'm glad you're here. You can start right in. Take off your hat. (*She starts to do so.*) Wait a minute. (*She puts her hat back on.*) This is part of your course, ain't it? Workin' here?

MARGIE

Yes, sir. I get credit for it as practical experience.

SMALL

And you understand I don't pay you for it?

MARGIE

Yes, sir, I understand that.

SMALL

All right, take it off. (*She does so.*) I need somebody since the Simmins girl wanted a raise. Don't say anything to my other clerk, that Miller feller, about working for nothing. He might want a raise. He knows a lot about books, but he's a damn fool. Tell him to finish that window. You can put your hat under the counter.

MARGIE (*moves behind counter, and puts it away*)

Thank you, now what shall I do?

SMALL

Wait on the customers, when there is any. Prices are marked plain. Can you work the cash register?

MARGIE

Yes, sir.

SMALL

Good. Don't forget to do it. In between times, sort them books in that pile there, and put 'em under the right labels. (*Indicates labelled sections in the shelves.*) I'm back in the office mostly. If you want to know anything ask Miller. He'll be in in a minute. He ain't quite as dumb as he looks. At least I hope not.

MARGIE

Oh, I don't think he's dumb at all.

SMALL

Do you know him?

MARGIE

I met him once, and I thought he was kind of nice. He's a little timid, but then I'm that way myself. Maybe you scare him.

SMALL

Huh! He's scared to start with. (*Moves up to door R.*) Of course it's his privilege to look as dumb as he wants to, but he abuses it.

[*He goes out. A pile of books followed by the lower portions of his body, appear as JOHN MILLER slowly emerges from the basement through trap door R. C. Carefully balancing the huge pile of books, he moves toward the counter, not seeing MARGIE, as his head is bent over the books. He is 22, lanky, awkward, with sensitive face, metal-rimmed glasses and misfit clothes. He is intensely serious and needs a haircut. Sensitive and secretly ambitious, he is entirely lack-*

ing in self-confidence, and his meekness is at once ridiculous and a bit pathetic. As the trap door bumps the counter, MARGIE starts.

MARGIE

Oh!

[JOHN drops the books—they scatter about their feet.

JOHN

Oh, I beg your pardon. (*Recognizes MARGIE.*) Oh—have you been waited on?

MARGIE

Oh, I'm not a customer. I work here too.

JOHN

Huh?

MARGIE

I'm the new clerk.

JOHN (*surprised but resigned*)

Oh, then I suppose I'm discharged. Well, it's all right. I expected it.

[Turns to close trap door.

MARGIE

Oh, no, you're not. I'm just here part time, and I wouldn't think of taking your place if I could.

JOHN

Oh, that would be all right. (*Drops the trap door. Begins to pick up books.*) No one would miss me.

MARGIE

I don't believe you remember me? I'm Marjorie Blake, you know.

JOHN (*rising quickly, with books in hand*)

Oh, yes, I remember you. I just didn't want to presume upon your—well, that you would remember *me*.

MARGIE

Of course I do. (*Begins to pick up books.*) It was so nice of you to give me all those specimens that day when our class was out doing field work. I couldn't tell one weed from another. I'm afraid I'm not much good at botany.

JOHN (*shyly*)

Oh, yes, you are. You remembered those specimens all right after I showed them to you three or four times.

[*Begins to pick up books.*]

MARGIE

What were you doing out there in the country all by yourself?

JOHN

I was looking for a cactus.

MARGIE

A cactus?

JOHN

Yes, it's—it's sandy out there—I often look for them. I found one once.

MARGIE

Well, it was awfully nice of you to help me out.

JOHN

Oh, that's all right.

[*Having picked up all but two or three books, he moves over with them to the R. end of counter.*]

MARGIE (*timidly trying to keep up the conversation*)

I went out there last Sunday to look for y—for some specimens. I thought I saw you up on the hill.

JOHN

Yes, I was out there. I thought maybe I'd find you
—er—a cactus or something.

[*Busies himself with books, embarrassed.*]

MARGIE

I waved to you—didn't you see me?

JOHN (*moving Center with a smile*)

Why, I kind of thought that was you—

MARGIE

But you didn't wave back.

JOHN

Well, I didn't think you *could* be waving to me.

MARGIE

Why not?

JOHN (*embarrassed*)

Oh, nobody ever does—much.

MARGIE

They don't?

JOHN

Oh, I guess I'm not the kind of fellow people wave
at.

MARGIE

Well, . . . I did . . . (*In mutual embarrassment they dive for the one remaining book on the floor, but stop as they almost bump heads. After a smile of embarrassment they try it again with the same result. Finally JOHN awkwardly kicks the book a little to the R., picks it up, and places it on his pile at the end of the counter R.*) Two of the other girls who are studying to be librarians chose the Varsity Store down at Twelfth Avenue, but I thought this one would be nicer.

JOHN (*looking from his books, very much pleased*)
You did?

MARGIE (*getting very busy with her books*)
It's more convenient. Colonel Small said you ought to finish cleaning the window.

JOHN (*with mild indignation*)
Why he just told me to let them go, and bring up some more books. I haven't finished yet.

MARGIE
Well then, tell him so.

JOHN
I'd like to tell him.

MARGIE
Why don't you?

JOHN (*convinced of his own abasement*)
Aw, he wouldn't stand for any argument from me.

MARGIE
I don't like to argue either—but we shouldn't let people impose on us.

JOHN
Oh, I don't.

MARGIE
Good.

JOHN
I tell him—sometimes . . . I will—I'll just show him once, that he can't chase me around from one thing to another.

SMALL (*entering R., gruffly*)
Hey, Miller—I told you to get them books.

JOHN (*pointing at them*)
I did, Mr. Small.

SMALL
The note books—the leather note books.

JOHN

No sir, you said to get these language books from the cellar first.

SMALL (*furiously*)

Will you get them note books?

JOHN (*as MARGIE glances at him—speaks bravely*)

Well now—

SMALL (*savagely*)

Well what?

JOHN (*weakening*)

Yes, sir. [*Goes out R.*]

SMALL (*to MARGIE, disgustedly*)

He's dumb.

[*Goes out R., importantly. MARGIE sighs and turns to her books, as JULIA WINTERS, a tall, good-looking, forceful type of girl, about 22, enters, L. She is quite well dressed.*]

JULIA (*approaching in front of counter*)

I beg your pardon—why, Margie—

MARGIE

Julia Winters! (*They kiss across the counter and burst into a cascade of giggles.*) What on earth are you doing in Columbus?

JULIA

We're down with the Wisconsin team for the track meet tomorrow.

MARGIE

Who's we?

JULIA

My room-mate, Angel and I.

MARGIE (*as they giggle some more*)

Oh, it's so good to see you. You're stouter, aren't you?

JULIA (*not so pleased*)

Oh, no, I'm thinner.

MARGIE (*quickly*)

Well, anyhow, you look better. (*More giggles, especially from JULIA.*) Where are you stopping?

JULIA

At the Sorority House. I've been looking for you all morning. What are you doing here?

MARGIE

Oh, this is part of my course. Librarian stuff, you know.

JULIA

Oh, it seems an eternity since we left the old seminary. (*Giggles.*) And you would come here to Ohio State.

MARGIE

And you would go to Wisconsin. (*This is a great joke so they giggle some more.*) Why don't you ever answer my letters?

JULIA

Oh, I've been so busy.

MARGIE

Yes, you popular old thing, getting your picture in all the papers.

JULIA

Oh, you mean when I was chosen Miss Wisconsin—silly, isn't it?

MARGIE

Yes. (*JULIA looks hurt.*) Oh, no, I think it's great.
[*JULIA smiles.*]

JULIA (*preening herself*)

I didn't want to go into the beauty contest, it

seemed so foolish—but they just made me. The papers copied my picture all over the country.

MARGIE

I noticed it said in the paper you were an honor student in psychology, too. That's something new, isn't it? I never knew you to study.

JULIA (*enthusiastically*)

You don't have to study in psychology. It's fascinating. (*Spies book on counter, picks it up.*) Oh, there's the new Psycho-analysis. That's a marvelous book, Margie. It has a wonderful chapter on the inferiority complex. Have you read it?

MARGIE

No, I've never taken any psychology.

JULIA

Well, you don't know what you're missing. We've got the most wonderful Prof. He just dotes on Psycho-analysis. He's a wiz.

MARGIE

Is he good-looking?

JULIA

No, but the things he reads in class,—well it isn't like studying at all.

MARGIE

Do you mean—snappy?

JULIA

Snappy? Well—I haven't been able to blush since the first semester,—I'm worn out. (*Giggle. Opens book.*) Here's one of the cases we analyzed. This is one of the simplest ones. (*Reads.*) "A woman was unhappily married to a man she had known since childhood. Even worse than this, he had a cork leg. Her most vivid dream was of a small,

dark man, walking down-stairs, playing a harp, and at the same time, selling . . . *watermelons*"——

Well, you know what that means, don't you?

[MARGIE *shakes her head*. JULIA *leans over and whispers in her ear*.

MARGIE (*indignantly*)

Why, she ought to be ashamed of herself.

JULIA

You ought to *read*. You'd love Freud. He's so brutal!

MARGIE

Brutal?

JULIA

Brutally frank. He just reduces everything to *Libido*.

MARGIE

What's Libido?

JULIA

It's the Life Force—it's what makes you do things.

MARGIE

What sort of things?

JULIA

Oh, Margie, I don't know you well enough to explain it; you'd better read the book.

MARGIE (*with a sudden thought*)

Say, Julia—how did you know I was here?

JULIA

I didn't. I just came in here to—to look for somebody.

MARGIE

Ah hah—I heard about you and the captain of the Wisconsin team—(*Giggles*.) What's his name—Hoyt? No wonder you came down to see the meet.

JULIA

Oh, Spike's all right—but I wouldn't want him to find me here. Tell me—is there a fellow working here by the name of Jack Miller?

MARGIE

There's a Miller working here. (*Looks toward door R., doubtfully.*) I don't think you would call him Jack. Do you know him?

JULIA

Well,—yes and no. You see, we've been corresponding.

MARGIE

Without knowing each other?

JULIA

Uh-huh. (*They just have to giggle over this.*) He saw my picture in the paper when I was chosen Miss Wisconsin—you know it was so silly, but the papers copied my picture all over the—

MARGIE

Yes, you told me.

JULIA

Oh. . . . Well, he began to write me the most wonderful letters. He's really a poet—a wonderful poet. He has such a sense of beauty—in one of his letters he called me orchidaceous!

MARGIE

What?

JULIA

Orchidaceous—that means like an orchid.

MARGIE

Well, that sounds like a poet.

JULIA

But Jack isn't a bit like a poet. You know, sort of

soft. He couldn't be, being a big fraternity man and a great athlete. (MARGIE *takes another doubtful look toward the door R.*) Oh, let me read you something. (*Takes letter from her handbag. As MARGIE glances at it, she giggles and turns the page.*) Here's something I can read. "As I sit here, in my cool study, relaxing after the struggle, tired of the vain cheering of the multitude in the race this afternoon"—that was the day he won both the sprints and the quarter mile in your All-Ohio meet—(MARGIE *looks puzzled. JULIA continues.*) "I wonder if perhaps there may drift before your blue eyes—"

MARGIE

Your eyes are brown.

JULIA (*severely*)

That's poetic license.

MARGIE (*rising from counter*)

Oh, that can't be the boy who works here.

JULIA

It must be. There's only one Miller in the University. I've been dodging Spike all morning, trying to find him.

MARGIE

But you're engaged to Spike Hoyt, aren't you? What would he say?

JULIA

Oh, Spike would throw a fit. (*Giggles.*) But it would do him good. He makes me jealous all the time.

[SPIKE HOYT, *an aggressive, athletic youth, enters from street door.*

HOYT

Well, Julia, what's the big idea?

JULIA (*sweetly*)

Oh, hello, Spike, how did you know I was here?

HOYT

Never mind how I knew you were here. I asked you what's the big idea?

JULIA

I don't know what you're talking about. Miss Blake, let me present Mr. Hoyt. (HOYT *moves impatiently*.) He really isn't always like this, Margie.

MARGIE

How do you do?

HOYT (*stiffly*)

I'm very glad to meet you, I'm sure. Julia is supposed to be engaged to me, Miss Blake. You wouldn't suspect it, though, unless I told you. She pretended to be all full of anxious to see me in this track meet: had to follow the team to Columbus.

JULIA

Well, if you don't appreciate having me root for you—

HOYT

Oh, yes—you had to come, but not to root for me—oh, no, it was to run around like a lolly, asking everybody you see about this Jack Miller.

JULIA

Oh, who told you such a thing?

HOYT

Who didn't tell me? The fellows from the Psi Sigma House kidded me about your calling up there.

JULIA

How did they know who called?

HOYT

They said "Who's speaking?"—and then like an egg

you spoke! . . . And besides that, two or three *girls* rub it in—you ought to consider *me*. I used to go to this school and I'm known here. And then—to make it good, I find you in here looking for him! (*Crosses to MARGIE.*) He works here, doesn't he?

MARGIE

There is a Miller here, but it can't be the same one.

HOYT

It better not be. Who is this bird, Julia,—it isn't that sap of a John Miller from New Winchester, I hope?

JULIA

He's not a sap—he's a fine boy.

HOYT

Oh, I knew him when he was a Freshman—he's an awful boob. We started in this school together—before I went to Wisconsin. He's still here, eh? He would be, the poor nut.

JULIA

You'll find out if he's a poor nut, when he beats you in the meet tomorrow.

HOYT

I suppose you want me to get beaten?

JULIA

I hope you do.

HOYT (*shocked*)

What? And you call yourself a Wisconsin girl! Do you want to be a traitor? Wait till I tell them that when we get back.

JULIA (*furiously*)

Tell them—you can tell them that I rooted for Ohio State.

HOYT (*aghast at such "treachery"*)

You wouldn't do *that*!

JULIA

Yes, I will. I'm going to root for Ohio State!

HOYT (*almost overcome*)

I don't care for myself—but—Wisconsin! All right—Go ahead. (*Crosses to door L.*) But a fat chance your friend Miller will have to beat me. He isn't even on the team, the poor sap.

JULIA

Don't you dare talk like that. He's a Fraternity Brother of yours.

[*She says this with bated breath.*]

HOYT (*derisively*)

That goof Miller—a Psi Sigma! Listen, woman—at the dinner when I was pledged to Psi Sigma, that oil-can spilled noodle soup on himself, and fell in a faint. You can have him!

[*Goes out furiously, slamming the door.*]

JULIA

Oh, dear—(*She paces over to the window, L., rubs a little spot in the whitewash, and peeps out.*) Oh Margie—those are Angel's feet.

MARGIE

What are?

JULIA

See—Outside—(*She stoops, looks under whitewashed space in window.*) Angel, my room-mate—she's walking away with Spike—wouldn't you know it?

MARGIE

Oh, well, let her have him.

JULIA

I will not, we're engaged—and that damn Angel

knows it, too. (*She dashes out the door. JOHN re-enters from R., carrying pile of note books and an apple. He places them in the small book case against the wall R.*)

MARGIE (*looking at him curiously*)

Say, do they ever call you Jack?

JOHN (*on guard*)

What?

MARGIE

I say, do they ever call you Jack?

JOHN (*sadly*)

No, they never do. . . .

MARGIE

What do they call you?

JOHN

Well, usually, they just point at me. Why?

MARGIE

Oh, I was just puzzled.

[MAGPIE WELCH, the University cheerleader, a flip-pant pleasant little fellow, enters from L. He is followed by "HUB" SMITH, a rather reserved, critical student of the most "standard" type, dressed in the quiet manner. Each carries an armful of books.]

HUB

Hello, Margie.

MARGIE

Hello, Hub. Hello, Magpie.

MAGPIE (*cheerily*)

Hi, Marge—Hot at the old life-work right off at the bat, eh? Imagine taking a course like that where you have to *work* all the time. I like a course where you can get some sleep.



HUB

Oh, shut up, Magpie. Since he was made cheerleader, he's got more to say than a radio.

MAGPIE

Come on—old Acid Mouth—put your books on the counter and get down to business. (*Drops his own books; HUB likewise.*) The point is: we are badly bent—in need of financial what-nots. Now we have here a splendid collection of books, which we will part with for a mere song.

MARGIE

Where on earth did you get *all those books*?

HUB (*innocently*)

From the fraternity house—we stole—

MAGPIE (*interrupting with a gesture*)

They are *our* books. The year's about over and we don't need books any more. These balmy evenings we can't study anyhow. How much will you give us for them?

MARGIE

Well, I can't buy them—maybe Mr. Miller here—

[JOHN *has shrunk back R. during this dialogue. Lays his apple on counter R.*

MAGPIE

Ah there, Miller, old kid. Step up and buy.

JOHN

Thank you. I—Can I look at them first?

[*He begins to do so, jotting down prices.*

MAGPIE

All right, but don't get them dirty. (*Crosses R. JOHN is behind counter, R. of MARGIE, HUB in front of counter, L. of MARGIE.*) How come you're not out for track any more, Miller?

JOHN (*not looking up*)

Oh—I gave it up, after some thought.

HUB

Yes, I noticed you haven't been around for the last week, when I made up the attendance list for Coach.

[JOHN *nods diffidently*.

MARGIE (*to relieve JOHN's embarrassment*)

How do you like being manager, Hub?

MAGPIE

He's only assistant—don't flatter him.

HUB

It's all right, but it's a lot of work. What was the matter, Miller? Find you were outclassed?

JOHN

Well, I guess I'd never be much good . . .

MAGPIE

Why, he ran a trial quarter the other day that looked slick—what was the time?

[*Turns to JOHN*.

JOHN

Oh, I don't know—when the Coach looked at the stop-watch—he gave me a kind of a funny look . . . and so—I just kept on running till I got home.

MARGIE

You mustn't be so easily discouraged.

[JOHN *is still counting up the prices of the books*.

HUB

Yes; why don't you snap out of that attitude, Miller—and do something? Get a hair-cut, for instance?

MAGPIE

If he got a hair-cut he couldn't make Phi Beta Kappa.

HUB

Well, how much for the books?

JOHN

I think we can give you four dollars and fifteen cents for the books.

HUB (*forcefully*)

I'll sell you the bunch for five dollars—and settle it.

JOHN

All right—(*Rings up "No Sale" on cash register, stops, looks up suddenly.*) No, wait a minute—that's *more!* (HUB and MAGPIE *laugh.*) I'm afraid four fifteen is the best—and *that* is speculative, practically.

HUB (*stepping up to him with pretended severity*)

Now, don't try to take advantage of us.

MAGPIE (*stepping up on R. side aggressively*)

Come on, trot out the five.

JOHN (*hesitantly*)

Well, I guess it's all right. (*Removes five-dollar bill from cash register, holds it out.*) All right, fellows, thanks.

HUB (*as both grab for it, and HUB gets it*)

Oh, that's all right.

[*Crosses left.*]

JOHN (*gathering up the books—to MARGIE*)

I'll have to file these away on the list in the back office. (*Crosses R., speaks to MAGPIE.*) Will you excuse me?

MAGPIE (*emphatically*)

With pleasure.

JOHN

Thank you—(*Sees the point.*) Oh—

[*Goes out R.*]

HUB (*to MAGPIE*)

So that's the fellow you and Pierce want to take into the fraternity.

MAGPIE

Aw, he means well.

HUB

Blah! (*Changes the subject.*) Margie, are you coming up to the house for dinner tonight? You promised, you know.

MARGIE

Well, Julia Winters is in town, she may want me to do something with her.

HUB

Bring her along for Magpie.

MAGPIE

What does she look like? I'm shy of these "blind dates."

MARGIE

Aw, she's a peach, Magpie. You know, she was Miss Wisconsin.

MAGPIE

Oh, well, I wouldn't want to miss Wisconsin. Sure, bring her along.

[WALLIE PIERCE, a good-looking athlete, appears in door, followed by COACH JACKSON, a husky, forceful man of 35 or 40.]

WALLIE

Hello, everybody.

HUB

Hello, Pierce.

[MAGPIE says, "*Ah, the Captain of our noble track team.*"]

MARGIE

Hello, Wallie.

COACH (*ignoring* MAGPIE)

Thought we saw you come in here, Hub. Get over to the track and make up the list.

HUB (*briskly*)

Yes, sir.

COACH

And hurry up. Pierce and I have got troubles of our own today. Come on, Wallie.

[*He goes out.*]

WALLIE

See you later, Margie.

[*Follows.*]

MARGIE

What did Coach mean by "trouble"? Aren't we going to win the meet tomorrow?

HUB

Haven't you heard? Saunders is ineligible.

MARGIE

No!

[JOHN *re-enters from R., quietly.*]

HUB

Yes! But I told Pierce to try to fix it up with Professor Deming, somehow.

MAGPIE

Aw, shut up. With me leading the cheers, those Badger "bozos" are sunk!

[*They go out boisterously. JOHN is behind the counter R. of MARGIE.*]

MARGIE

They're kind of crazy, aren't they?

JOHN

Oh, no, they're always like that,—sort of happy and

not caring a darn about anything. . . . I wish I could be that way.

MARGIE

Oh, Hub's pretty nice, if he is crabby, but you wouldn't want to be like Magpie, would you, honestly?

JOHN (*amazed*)

Why, they're both Psi Sigmas—and big men in school, almost as big as—as Wallie Pierce.

MARGIE

Oh, what's so *wonderful* about Wallie?

JOHN

Why, Pierce is captain of the track team, and Sphinx and Psi Sigma—

MARGIE

Well, *you* are very likely to make Phi Beta Kappa, aren't you?

JOHN

Oh, I might, but that isn't like a *social* fraternity, you know.

MARGIE

But it's a great honor to be so good in your school work that you're chosen for it.

JOHN

Oh, sure, but those other fellows don't think so. They just think Phi Beta Kappa men are a lot of long-haired goops. It's honorary and everything—but not like the honors Wallie Pierce has.

MARGIE

Do you think those things are so important when you get out in life?

JOHN

Well, this is our life now—I'd give anything in the

world to be a Psi Sigma.—Oh, well, I guess I'll wash the window.

[*Crosses to door Left, picks up a dry cloth from window sill, and begins to rub the Bon Ami from the glass pane in the door.*]

MARGIE (*sympathetically*)

You don't belong to any fraternity, do you?

JOHN

No, I made up my mind that if I couldn't be a Psi Sigma, I wouldn't be anything. So of course I'm not anything. I guess it's just as well, though; the other fraternities have a hard enough time without me being a burden to them.

MARGIE (*sitting on L. end of counter*)

I never met anyone like you before.

JOHN

How do you mean?

MARGIE

Oh you know, so *awfully* modest. Of course, it's a relief after most of these conceited boys—but don't you think you're a little *extreme*?

JOHN (*turning away from his work*)

Oh, I'm not modest—I've had some wonderful things happen to me—considering that it was *me*. Now just to look at me you wouldn't believe that I have been invited to dinner at the Psi Sigma house, would you?

MARGIE

Oh, I don't know.

JOHN (*proudly and tenderly*)

Well I have—twice. Just a couple of weeks ago Wallie Pierce took me up there. He's in the same

Botany Laboratory with me, and he has been very—well—*yes*—you might almost say—friendly.

MARGIE

But you said you were there *twice*.

JOHN

Oh, fortunately, none of them remembered the first time. That was four years ago. There's a new crowd now. I'd never dare to go if any of the older fellows were still there. *That* was just—just terrible!

[Turning to the door, he absent-mindedly draws the Greek letters, "Psi Sigma," in the whitewash, with his finger.]

MARGIE

What was?

JOHN

What happened four years ago. I'd rather not talk about it. *(Overcome by the memory, he turns back to the door, erases the letters "Psi Sigma" and rubs away busily at the glass for a moment. MARGIE turns away, feeling that the subject is closed. After a second JOHN turns toward her again, unable to drop the painful subject.)* . . . Oh . . . It was terrible.

MARGIE *(sympathetically)*

Can't you tell me about it? I'm really interested.

JOHN

Well, . . .

[Crosses R. with an apprehensive look toward COLONEL SMALL'S door. Turns back and sits on counter R. of MARGIE.]

MARGIE

What was so terrible about it?

JOHN (*hesitantly*)

Well, you see, they had noodle soup.

MARGIE (*remembering HOYT's remark*)

Noodle soup?

JOHN

Yes, at this dinner at the Psi Sigma House—I was a Freshman, and they were “rushing” me—they really *were*. You see I had been recommended to them by a friend of my mother's. He didn't know me very well. They were “rushing” another fellow named Hoyt.

MARGIE

Hoyt?

JOHN

Yes. He's at Wisconsin now. Well, we were invited to dinner together. They liked Hoyt, but I was pretty nervous. Well, they had this noodle soup—and they said grace. We never said grace at home: my father was a doctor.

MARGIE

He never said grace?

JOHN (*trying to remember*)

Well, not after I was born. Well, at this dinner, all of a sudden, I realized that I was eating my soup right in the middle of grace!

MARGIE (*tensely*)

Well?

JOHN (*proceeding with a morbid fascination*)

I went to bow over, and I got my elbow on the edge of my plate, and—immediately I was all covered with noodles! Oh, God, it was awful!

[*He almost breaks down at the memory and begins absently to brush himself with the Bon Ami cloth,*

leaving smudges of white on his clothes, in place of the imaginary noodles.

MARGIE

You never got over it, did you? What did you do afterward?

JOHN

Oh, I quit school after a week or so. I couldn't bear it—that soup—and then my father died, too—that was another thing.

MARGIE

But you came back?

JOHN

Oh, yes, after things settled down at home. I worked first for a while, then I heard that Hoyt had gone to Wisconsin, so I came back. . . . I may be able to get both degrees next year.

MARGIE

Your Master's Degree, too? Oh, fine—you could be an instructor then, or something.

JOHN (*pleased at this sympathetic attitude*)

Yes, I'd like that. You know everybody says teaching doesn't amount to anything, but sometimes I think a fellow might be happier if he just didn't try to amount to anything. You ought to see the paper I'm preparing on the Algæ.

MARGIE (*moving nearer*)

The Algæ?

JOHN

Yes, and I've got a collection. I'd like to show them to you some . . . some . . . time. . . . (*He breaks off embarrassed, then rises.*) I'd better clean that window.

[*Crosses to door Left and resumes cleaning.*]

MARGIE

Oh, wait a minute. I like to talk to you. You're sort of fascinating.

JOHN (*looking at her doubtfully*)

You don't mean that in earnest?

MARGIE

Yes I do.

JOHN (*with an embarrassed grin*)

Aw . . . (*Crosses awkwardly and sits on stool L. of counter.*) It's easy to talk to you. Most people are so—well, how do you mean fascinating?

MARGIE (*thoughtfully*)

Well, you're sort of a dreamer, aren't you? You'd like to be a Psi Sigma, and you went out for the track team—you'd like to be an athlete . . . (*Picks up book on Psycho-analysis. Glances at it, then at JOHN thoughtfully.*) You know, I was told about a boy once who wanted to do a lot of brave things and didn't, so he made up stories about himself and pretended that he did them.

JOHN (*glancing at her uneasily*)

I guess you thought he was kind of a darn fool, didn't you?

MARGIE (*smiling reassuringly*)

No. I guess he didn't have any friends and he was sort of discouraged, and making up stories was good for him. It made him feel that he was somebody—kept him from going to pieces.

JOHN (*sadly*)

I know what you mean— (*Then a little suspiciously.*)

Of course I never did anything like that—*stories*—

MARGIE

Oh, no—but *this* boy used to pretend that he was

making love, too. He would write letters and tell all these things he did to an imaginary girl—sort of an ideal.

JOHN (*considerably startled by the similarity to his own case*)

Well, there wouldn't be any harm in that, would there?

MARGIE

No, not a bit. (JOHN *turns front, reassured.*) Unless it were to a *real* girl. And he made her fall in love with a sort of an ideal of him. (JOHN *seems lost in worried thought.*) You wouldn't want to ruin a girl's life, would you? (JOHN *shakes his head absently.* MARGIE *slips the question over.*) Do you idealize *her*?

JOHN (*absently*)

I always imagine she's kind of delicate—like a flower—you know—

MARGIE (*who has connected it all up with JULIA's story*)
Orchidaceous!

JOHN

Yes—how did you know?

[*Rises, startled.*]

MARGIE

Julia Winters was just in here looking for you.

JOHN

What?

MARGIE

She'll be back.

JOHN

Ooo!

[*Dashes to trap door, opens it and begins to descend*]

ladder. PIERCE and PROFESSOR DEMING, *a man about 50, enter L.*

PROFESSOR

Hello, John. (JOHN *stops, half-way down the ladder.*) How do you do, Miss Blake?

MARGIE

How do you do, Professor Deming?

PIERCE (*down L.*)

Well, John, Professor Deming has some good news for you.

PROFESSOR (*L. of MARGIE*)

Yes, John, your school work has been so fine that at our Chapter meeting this afternoon you were elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

MARGIE

Oh!

JOHN (*still dazed*)

What? I was? Well, well.

[*Ascends two or three steps.*]

MARGIE

Congratulations, Jo—Mr. Miller—I don't care what the boys think of Phi Beta Kappa—I think it's fine.

PIERCE

I just met Mr. Deming, and when he told me about it I thought we'd stop in and ask you to come up to the Psi Sigma House for dinner tonight.

JOHN

The Psi Sigma House? Well, well, well.

[*Comes all the way out of the cellar, delighted.*]

PIERCE

Yes, all the fellows will be glad to hear the news.

I've got to run over to the track now, but Mr. Deming will go up with you, if you're through here.

MARGIE

Oh, I forgot you're a Psi Sigma, Professor.

PROFESSOR

I try not to forget it. How about it, John?

JOHN

Well, that's wonderful. I'll be glad to come all right. I'll go ask Colonel Small if he wants me to work this evening.

[Starts off Right.]

MARGIE

You're not supposed to work in the evenings, are you?

JOHN

No, I'm not supposed to, but I do sometimes. I don't like to argue with him.

[He goes out R.]

MARGIE

Oh, I wish he had some spunk.

PIERCE

That's the trouble; he gets scared. He quit the track squad last week for no reason at all.

PROFESSOR

It's just as well he did. That's not his field, Pierce. He ought to stick to Botany; he's brilliant at that—first man to be elected to Phi Beta Kappa this year.

PIERCE

He is, eh? Lord, I used to laugh at Phi Bet when I was a Freshman, but now I'd rather have that old scholastic key than all the old college honors put together.

MARGIE

But he wouldn't. He wants to be like you—funny, isn't it?

[PIERCE *looks startled at the word "funny."*

PROFESSOR

No, it isn't funny, it's rather tragic.

PIERCE

What do you mean, tragic?

PROFESSOR

But it's a disease most of us have to go through.

PIERCE

A disease?

PROFESSOR

Yes, the desire for conformity—the desire to be just like everybody else. It's almost epidemic at present; John has an acute case.

[JOHN *re-enters from R.*

JOHN

He says I can go most any time now.

[*Moves behind cash register, picks up note book.*

MARGIE *is behind counter L. of JOHN, PIERCE down L., PROFESSOR down R.*

MARGIE

I'm going to dinner at the Psi Sigma house, too.

JOHN

You are?

PIERCE

Yes, and the Wisconsin team got in this morning—their Captain is a Psi Sigma, so I guess he'll be there too—Spike Hoyt.

JOHN (*dropping the note book*)

Hoyt! (*Turns to PROFESSOR.*) Say, I just re-

membered, I've got a lot of work to do this evening at home.

PROFESSOR

Oh, you can do that afterward.

[JULIA enters from street door. JOHN turns and looks at her, frightened.]

JULIA (*breathlessly*)

Oh, Margie—

MARGIE

Oh, did you catch Spike?

JULIA

No, and I can't find Jack, either. (JOHN slowly bends over until he disappears behind the counter.)

When you get through here, will you help me look for him? It's so strange—I don't know what to think. Oh, are you busy?

MARGIE (*intending to introduce JOHN*)

No. This is—(*Misses JOHN, turns to PROFESSOR.*)

Professor Deming, Miss Winters.

PROFESSOR

How do you do.

JULIA

How do you do. (*Turns to WALLIE PIERCE hopefully.*) And are you Jack Miller?

MARGIE

Oh, no, this is Wallie Pierce. Wallie is the Captain of *our* track team.

JULIA

Well, then you can tell me. It's the strangest thing—(JOHN crawls out from behind R. end of counter, tries to pass the PROFESSOR, who does not see him, and blocks his way to the door R.) I'm

looking for one of the men on your team,—Jack Miller.

PIERCE

Miller? Why, he's right here!

[JOHN rises, in panic.

JOHN

No!

[Tries unsuccessfully to get past the PROFESSOR, turns back in desperation.

JULIA (looking at JOHN aghast)

Are you Jack Miller? (Unable to speak, JOHN makes a sudden dive down the trap door and disappears.) Is that Jack?

MARGIE

That's Jack.

JULIA

Well, the poor nut—he can't get away from me like that. I'm going to tell him a few things.

[She follows him down the ladder, angrily.

MARGIE (laughing)

Wait, Julia, I'll go with you. Excuse me.

[She too, descends the ladder. PIERCE and the PROFESSOR exchange a look of amazement.

PROFESSOR

Well, of all the—

[MAGPIE and HUB rush in from the street door.

MAGPIE (breathlessly)

Where's Miller?

HUB

Yes, where's Miller?

PIERCE

The girls are chasing him.

HUB

Chasing Miller? What for?

PIERCE

Search me.

MAGPIE

We've just heard he's made Phi Beta Kappa.

PROFESSOR

That's true.

MAGPIE

And the Sig Rhos are looking for him. We need scholarship worse than they do!

PROFESSOR (*smiling*)

Well, that's one way to get it.

MAGPIE

Our bunch has got to work fast.

PIERCE

Well, how about it, Hub? Everyone has O. K.'d him but you.

HUB

Well, we can't let the Sig Rhos get him, but doggone it, I think a fraternity ought to come up to a certain standard, a gentlemanly—

PIERCE

This boy *is* a gentleman.

HUB (*feeling that this is the one test*)

Well, I'd like to get him drunk, and see how he carries his liquor!

[MAGPIE and PIERCE nudge him, indicating that the PROFESSOR is present. HUB looks embarrassed.]

PIERCE

Well, say something—yes or no?

MAGPIE

Yeah—come on—

HUB

Oh, all right—O. K. But I make one reservation. If we do pledge him, we've got to civilize him. Make him dress and act human, like other people—

[Adjusts his own necktie, proudly.]

PROFESSOR

But look here. If you boys want to pledge Miller, all right. It will encourage him, and he may be a good influence for you.

HUB and MAGPIE

Huh?

PROFESSOR

But try to encourage him to be just himself. Don't force him into the regulation mode. You see he's different from you two boys—he has the old-fashioned idea that college is an educational institution.

HUB (*interrupting*)

Oh, we know he's a dumb-bell—I'll take charge of him.

MAGPIE

Then God help him.

[JULIA enters from R., followed by MARGIE.]

MARGIE

He got out the back way.

[HUB and MAGPIE cough pointedly.]

PIERCE

Oh, Miss Winters: May I present Mr. Magpie Welch, and Mr. Hub Smith.

JULIA

Oh, how do you do?

HUB and MAGPIE (*speaking together*)

I'm very pleased to meet you, I'm sure.

[They break off and look at each other reproachfully.]

HUB (*stepping forward*)

We hear you've been chasing John Miller.

MAGPIE (*stepping in ahead of him*)

Of course we didn't believe it, but that's the story we heard.

JULIA (*playing up to the two new boys*)

Huh, I nearly dropped dead when I saw him.

HUB

What did he do?

JULIA

He fell down-stairs.

HUB

He would.

PIERCE

You hadn't seen him before?

JULIA

I should say not, and I don't care if I never see him again.

[SMALL pushes JOHN on from R., drowning his protests.]

SMALL

Git in there! What do you mean by picking flowers in the back yard with a store full of customers?

JOHN (*who has his hands full of plant specimens, weeds, grasses, flowers and a flat cactus, like a three-branched pancake.*) Now listen, please—

SMALL

Git in there! Wait on that lady.

[Gives JOHN a final push, pointing at JULIA, and goes out R. JOHN stands confronting JULIA who is

L. of him. PROFESSOR *down R.* MARGIE *at L. end of counter and the three boys down L.*

JULIA (*with poisonous sweetness*)

Were you picking flowers for me, Jack?

PIERCE

Oh, you know Miller?

JULIA

Oh, we know each other very well, don't we—Jack?

MAGPIE

Jack?

JOHN (*terribly confused*)

Oh, yes, we always call each other Jack—I mean I call her—well—er—you know John is my right name.

[*Turns helplessly to PROFESSOR.*]

JULIA

What made you run away?

JOHN

I *knew* you—I mean I didn't recognize you,—er—

[*Turns to PROFESSOR again.*]

PROFESSOR (*coming to the rescue*)

You mean you hadn't met for some time.

JULIA

No, but we *corresponded*—didn't we, Jack?

JOHN

What? Oh yes, corresponded. (*Turns to PROFESSOR nervously.*) That is, we wrote letters back and forth, occasionally. (*Turns back to JULIA.*) Oh, yes indeed. (*Crosses to PIERCE, desperately.*) It's a hot day. (*Wipes brow with plant specimens.*)

PIERCE (*at L. end of counter*)

Seems cool in here—was it hot out in the yard?

JOHN (*trying to be nonchalant*)

Oh, yes—hot—very hot. (*Attempts to sit on counter, sits on MARGIE's lap, who is on center of counter, rises in terrible confusion, bows to MARGIE.*) I beg your pardon. (*Turns to JULIA, who laughs at him, turns back to MAGPIE and HUB, who are also giving him the laugh. Tries to change the subject.*) I thought I could utilize the time to collect a few specimens. (*Indicates flowers, etc., in his hand. The boys snicker and turn away. As JULIA eyes him, he crosses back to PROFESSOR down R. desperately.*) Look, Professor, here's a campanulaceous flower that I've never seen before—and just look at *this*—it's a cactus! Yes sir,—a real cactus.

PROFESSOR (*not very helpful*)

Well, well.

JULIA

Well, what about it?

JOHN (*painfully, trying to keep on the subject of cactuses, or anything not personal*)

Well, you know that is not indigenous to this locality, by any means. No, by no means. . . .

JULIA

It isn't *what*?

JOHN

What? A cactus. Or certainly of the cactus family. It is prickly.

MAGPIE (*L. of PIERCE*)

You said it was hot out there. Maybe it has prickly heat.

JOHN (*unable to cope with levity*)

Well . . .

HUB (*L. of MAGPIE*)

Or maybe it couldn't stand being indigenous and it just broke out that way.

JOHN

No . . . it is *not* indigenous. Except in arid regions.

HUB

Oh well, in arid regions anyone is apt to get a *little* indigenous—

JULIA

When do you athletes get time to study up all those words, John?

MAGPIE *and* HUB

Athletes?

JOHN

Words? Oh, perhaps, I was a trifle pedantic—but I always thought I had a very poor vocabulary—except . . .

[*Drops all his specimens except cactus on bookcase down R.*]

PROFESSOR (*rising*)

Don't let them worry you, John. It wouldn't harm any of you boys to enlarge your vocabularies a little. Now I'm going to walk on up to the house, if you'll excuse me.

[*PROFESSOR crosses toward door L. JOHN follows, hanging on his arm.*]

PIERCE

Certainly. See you at dinner, Professor.

JOHN

But, Professor, about this cactus . . .

PROFESSOR

We'll look into that cactus later, John. (*Turns to MAGPIE and HUB down L.*) You know, boys, if you have the right viewpoint, the cactus can be just as thrilling as a football game.

[PROFESSOR *goes out L.*]

JOHN (*starts to go out door L.*)

Say, I think I'll just go along with him. I need to get cleaned up a little.

JULIA (*going right after him*)

No, Jack—you aren't afraid to stay and tell *me* about your specimens, are you?

JOHN

Oh, no—only I didn't think you would be interested.

JULIA

Well, I am. (*She sits decisively, but rises with a howl.*) Ouch, I sat on it!

MARGIE

On what?

JULIA

On his damn cactus!

[*Pulls it off her dress, throws it on floor. All laugh.*]

JOHN (*picks it up, examines it*)

It's all right—you didn't hurt it.

JULIA

I don't care if I killed it—look what it's done to me!

[*She moves down L., pulling her skirt around.*]

JOHN

No!

[*Crosses R. behind counter.*]

MARGIE

You aren't bleeding or anything.



JULIA

No, but I'm stabbed. My dress is all full of little stickers, too.

MARGIE (*moving L.*)

I'll help you pick them out.

[JOHN *tries to sneak out R.*

HUB (*turning JULIA around so he can get a better look*)

Here—the light's better there.

JULIA

Jack's the one that did it—let him pick them out.

[JOHN *straightens up, horrified at the idea.*

JOHN

Ohh!

MAGPIE

Sure, he can do it right.

HUB (*crossing to John R., pushes him L.*)

Sure, step up, John, and help the lady.

JOHN (*piteously*)

It isn't really my cactus—I just found it.

JULIA

Well, come here and take it back—I've still got half of it in my skirt.

[HUB *pushes JOHN down beside JULIA. MARGIE is on her L. as is MAGPIE. HUB R. of JOHN. JOHN timidly attempts to pick out one or two cactus spines.*

JULIA

Don't push—pull!

[PIERCE *crosses R. behind counter, grinning.*

JOHN (*turning to HUB*)

Oh, listen, I'm no good at a thing like this.

HUB

Well, what do you think we are—professionals?

MAGPIE

I'll bet he's done this before and won't admit it.

HUB

Sure—I saw him yesterday noon chasing a couple of girls with a cactus in each hand.

JOHN (*desperately*)

No—those were overshoes!

[*The boys shout with laughter.*]

MARGIE

I think we've got them all out now.

[JOHN *immediately jumps up and backs away.*]

MAGPIE

That's great, John.

[*He and HUB applaud.*]

JULIA

I don't think it's so funny. I should think you boys would be ashamed to have a cactus hound as a member of your fraternity.

[JOHN *is horribly scared as she mentions "fraternity."*]

HUB (*suspiciously*)

What do you mean—a member of our fraternity?

He doesn't belong to it yet.

JOHN (*desperately*)

No, of course not. That was just one of her little jokes. (*Tries to smile at HUB, then at PIERCE, crosses R., hopelessly, feeling that the worst has come.*)

JULIA

Oh, no, I'm not joking. I was under the impression that you were a member.

PIERCE (*sensing that rescue is needed*)

We were just going to talk to John about that.

JULIA

What do you mean?

PIERCE

I mean I was just going to ask John something. (*Turns to JOHN.*) It's about the fraternity. (*MARGIE moves in L. of PIERCE.*) Of course you know we don't usually do any "rushing" at this time of year, but—well, the boys all like you very much, Miller, and we want you to be one of us.

JOHN

What?

PIERCE

Now, here's a pledge pin I'd like to put on you, if you feel that you want to say Yes.
[*Takes pledge button from pocket.*]

MARGIE

Oh, isn't that wonderful!

[*JULIA looks stunned.*]

JOHN (*pathetically*)

Say, Pierce, don't kid me like this. I might believe it or something.

PIERCE

I'm not kidding. Shall I put it on, or do you want to think it over for a while?

[*Begins to fasten button in JOHN's lapel, without waiting.*]

JOHN

Oh, no, but I think you fellows ought to think it over. You don't know me very well.

PIERCE

Oh, rot—we're satisfied—if you are. Here—(*Shaking hands with JOHN.*) Congratulations, John—we're mighty glad to have you.

MARGIE

I'm so glad.

MAGPIE (*rushing down*)

Congratulations, John.

[*He shakes hands with JOHN and slaps him on back.*]

HUB (*shaking hands*)

Can't you smile a little?

JOHN (*looks at pin proudly, smiles happily, sobers as he looks up*)

I'm afraid you fellows are making a terrible mistake!

JULIA

I quite agree. They are!

PIERCE

We don't think so.

HUB (*Crossing R. to JOHN, leans against bookcase down R.*)

Well, it's too late to worry about that now. We've got to get you fixed up. You can't go to dinner looking like that.

[*Eyes JOHN's appearance disapprovingly.*]

MARGIE (*up L.*)

Oh, don't be so funny, Hub—that's mean.

HUB (*grinning at MARGIE*)

Why not, he's a Freshman? (*Turns to JOHN, sternly.*) You understand that, don't you, Miller? Even though you're a Junior in school, you're a Freshman in the fraternity, and from now on you're going to be treated like one. Understand?

JOHN

Oh, I don't mind that.

HUB

All right. Then I'll take you in hand. Now in the first place, you've got to begin to look human.

JOHN

Right away? I've always looked like this.

MAGPIE (*L. of HUB*)

Oh, he doesn't mean completely human—just like him. Order your suits from Tripler's.

JULIA

He'll have to do more than that to make him look human.

HUB (*considering*)

Well, he could smoke a pipe—it might offset the goggles.

JOHN

Mr. Small has one here somewhere.

[*Hurries to cash register, rings "No Sale" and removes an old pipe from the cash register. The boys laugh.*]

HUB

Never mind, we'll begin on your hair and your necktie tonight.

JOHN (*feeling for necktie*)

I have a necktie on.

MAGPIE

That's the trouble. You should have buried that one.

HUB

And your hair—don't you ever comb it?

JOHN (*proudly*)

Oh, yes, every morning.

JULIA

That's the way it looks.

HUB

Now you get busy and comb it. Part it on the side the way I do.

JOHN

All right, sir. (*Rings up ten cents on the cash register and removes small mirror and comb, begins to comb his hair. The boys exchange a look of amusement.*) Oh, look, now I rang up ten cents!

MARGIE (*to HUB*)

Well, if you don't like his necktie, can't you lend him another one?

HUB (*hesitantly*)

Sure, I'll be glad to. (*Crosses to PIERCE.*) Pierce, you just bought a lot of neckties. Can't you lend him one?

PIERCE

Certainly. I'll *give* him one,—of yours. (*Crosses to door L.*) I've got to get over to the track.

MARGIE

I'll go with you and bring the tie back.

[PIERCE *and* MARGIE *go out.*]

MAGPIE (*R. of JOHN*)

Hurry up with your hair, Miller.

JOHN

It won't part right. I have a "cowlick."

JULIA

You *would* have.

[JULIA *sitting on stool on L. end of counter.*]

HUB (*slapping counter*)

Look here, Miller. Don't argue!

MAGPIE

No!

HUB (*crossing to MAGPIE, turns back to JOHN*)

We've got a lot of work to do on you to try to make you look like a Psi Sigma.

JOHN

Oh, I get so nervous when I look in the mirror! (*Dropping comb nervously.*) Oh, I'm afraid it's no use, fellows—you'd better take this pin back. I'll never amount to anything.

JULIA (*suddenly*)

Ah!

MAGPIE

What's the matter? What is it?

JULIA

I know what's the matter with him. It isn't his hair or his necktie or his collar—it's nothing external—it's internal, and I can cure him. Come here, Jack!

JOHN (*moving slowly L., hypnotized*)

I feel all right.

JULIA

Sit down! (*Pushes him on the stool L. of counter.*) Oh, I'm so glad I've discovered it. This boy has an Inferiority Complex.

JOHN

What?

JULIA

The trouble with you is—you have an Inferiority Complex.

JOHN

I have? That's a bad thing, isn't it?

JULIA

Terrible, it's the *worst* mental condition *possible*.

JOHN

That sounds as if I would have it, all right.

HUB

How do you know all this, Miss Winters?

JULIA

I've specialized in psychology. (*Steps back and surveys JOHN critically.*) Something has impeded the natural functioning of your ego.

JOHN (*swallowing*)

What?

JULIA

You are oppressed by a sense of inferiority—helplessness, futility—

JOHN

How did you know?

JULIA

I've studied all about you. To begin with, you are an emotional introvert.

MAGPIE

And that's only the beginning.

JULIA

That is the Psycho-analytical name for his psychic type. It is the type which produces most of the extreme neurotic and hysterical cases.

JOHN (*running his finger around his collar*)

You know this wouldn't make me so nervous if I just had my collar on.

[*Turns up coat collar.*]

JULIA

That can wait, but the emotional introvert class also includes many great geniuses.

JOHN

Isn't there some other class I could belong to?

JULIA

Yes, but you don't. I can prove it. Take, for example, those letters.

JOHN (*in agony*)

Oh, I was afraid you were going to bring that up and—

MAGPIE

What letters?

JULIA

Never mind, that's between Jack and me. But those letters show what you want to be, and what you can be if you get rid of this complex. Those letters were an attempt to rise above your inferiority, but that is not the right way. The right way is to remove your real inferiority.

JOHN (*gloomily*)

You mean shoot myself?

JULIA

Oh, no! (*The boys laugh.*) By conquering your weaknesses and gaining strength, I will help you. I will become your analyst.

HUB (*seriously interested*)

What?

JULIA

I mean his Psycho-analyst. (*Crosses to counter.*) Where's that book? (*Picks up psychology book.*) Now you boys wait outside. I've got to ask John some very personal questions.

JOHN

Oh, no—let them stay!

HUB (*crossing L.*)

Yes, this sounds interesting.

MAGPIE (*crossing L.*)

Aw, we don't want to go *now*.

JULIA (*pushing them*)

No, the relation between a subject and his analyst is very confidential. Now get out.

[*Pushing HUB out.*]

MAGPIE (*at door*)

It doesn't sound proper to me. Listen, Julia, don't tell him there isn't any Santa Claus.

[*He goes out. JULIA crosses to JOHN, who has backed over to stool in front of bookcase down R. She takes the stool and sits L. of him.*]

JULIA

Oh, Jack, I've always wanted to analyze somebody, and now I've got you. Spike won't let me—he resists me, but I know you *yield* to me.

JOHN

How do you mean—yield?

JULIA

It is a relation in which you must confide to me all your secrets, and that should be easy because you've already idealized me in your mind and in your letters, haven't you, Jack?

JOHN (*hesitantly*)

Oh, yes.

JULIA

Well, first you must tell me all your sexual problems.

JOHN (*rising startled*)

What?

JULIA

Why, Jack, you're a scientific student. You aren't afraid to use the word sex, are you?

JOHN

No, not in the class-room—but privately it sounds so kind of . . . public.

JULIA

You must tell me all your thoughts. Your Libido must be turned outward.

JOHN

Outward?

JULIA

I'm sorry, but it's necessary. Tell me, Jack, do you *dream* much?

JOHN

You mean—when I'm asleep?

JULIA

Of course. Now you must tell me every single dream you've ever had.

JOHN (*rising in indignation*)

I beg your pardon!

JULIA

Ah, I thought so! You *must* tell me. It's the only way to delve into your unconscious.

JOHN

My what?

[*Buttons his coat nervously.*]

JULIA

Your unconscious mind. The place where you bury all your evil thoughts and hidden longings.

JOHN

How do you know I have any?

JULIA

I can see that there is some dream which pursues you. . . . (JOHN *winces.*) Clings to you, frightens you. (JOHN *shudders.*) What is it?

JOHN (*dropping on the stool*)

I don't like to talk about it.

JULIA

Come now, tell Julia—what is it?

JOHN

Well—

JULIA

Well?

JOHN

It's *noodle soup*.

JULIA

What?

JOHN

Noodle soup.

JULIA

Noodle soup?

JOHN

Does that mean something bad?

JULIA

Bad? Oh, my God, it's terrible!

[*As JULIA backs away, MARGIE enters hurriedly from up L., with tie and collar.*]

MARGIE

Wallie sent you this tie.

JULIA (*impatiently*)

Oh, Margie, I told those boys to let us alone.

MARGIE

Well, they thought he'd need this, and I thought you'd like this flexible collar.

JOHN (*crossing to MARGIE, thankfully, takes collar and tie and starts R. hurriedly*)

Oh, thank you—I'll be right out.

JULIA

That's a bow tie—can you tie a bow?

JOHN

Well, not very well. (*JULIA starts toward him.*)

Oh, yes, I can.

[*Starts R.*

JULIA

Wait, I'll tie it for you. I knew you were the type who couldn't tie a bow.

[*As she begins to tie, SPIKE HOYT enters from door up L.*

SPIKE HOYT (*sarcastically*)

Oh, Julia. (*All three turn. JOHN looks scared.*)

If you're not too busy there with your friend—(*JOHN edges away.*) I'd like to speak to you a minute.

JULIA

Why certainly, Spike, come in.

HOYT

Out here!

[*Beckons her toward door L. JOHN tries to keep his back turned to HOYT and busily buttons the collar on, being plainly nervous in HOYT's presence.*

JULIA

Oh, all right.

[*Goes out with SPIKE HOYT up L.*

MARGIE

I'll tie it for you.

[*Begins to do so.*

JOHN (*looking over her shoulder toward door L.*)

He looks bigger than he used to.

MARGIE

It's the underneath end that's shorter, but only an

inch or so. (*Looking after JULIA.*) She's a peach, isn't she?

JOHN (*looking at picture which he takes from pocket, thoughtfully*)

Yes, she certainly is!

MARGIE

What's that?

JOHN

Her picture—Miss Wisconsin.

MARGIE

Where did you get it?

JOHN

Out of the newspaper—I bought eleven of them—they wear out so fast! She *is* beautiful.

[*Looks at picture.*]

MARGIE

She has such pretty eyes.

JOHN

Yes, blue.

MARGIE

No, they're brown.

JOHN

Oh, well. I always *imagined* they were blue.

MARGIE

Oh, no—they're a beautiful dark brown—haven't you *noticed* them?

JOHN

Well . . . yes . . .

MARGIE

I wish I had eyes like hers. *My eyes are blue.*

JOHN (*surprised*)

They are? (*Looks at her thoughtfully.*) Yes, sir

. . . they are blue, aren't they? Sort of a soft blue. Well—what do you know about that?

MARGIE

I think Julia's awfully interested in you.

JOHN (*worried*)

She's going to turn my Libido outward.

MARGIE

What for?

JOHN

Just so she can look at it, I guess. It's a psychological experiment.

MARGIE

No, it isn't just that—she likes you.

JOHN

Oh—how could a girl who is beautiful and popular and everything, ever like *me*?

MARGIE

Why couldn't she? (*He looks doubtful.*) How would you feel if you found out she does care for you—better than Spike Hoyt, or anyone?

JOHN (*looks at picture*)

Oh Lord, I couldn't bear it!

MARGIE

What!

JOHN (*sincerely*)

I mean it would be too wonderful! Oh Lord, I would just feel— (*Sighs in imagined ecstasy.*) You know I'm not always quiet—like you have seen me. Sometimes when something nice happens I get all . . . joyful . . . you know . . . sort of ecstatic!

MARGIE

You mean—if she kissed you, for instance?

JOHN

Oh, such a thing couldn't happen—unless she just meant to renounce everything.

MARGIE

How do you mean?

JOHN (*hesitantly*)

Oh . . . a kiss always seemed just the same to me as . . . getting married.

MARGIE

Why, haven't you ever been kissed?

JOHN (*evading that embarrassing point*)

Well . . . I've always been more interested in botany . . .

[JULIA enters, followed by HOYT, who is angry. HUB and MAGPIE follow HOYT, grinning.]

HOYT

Well, Julia, are you coming with me, or aren't you?

JULIA

I'm going to the Psi Sigma house with Jack, as I told you.

HOYT

With Jack! (*Crosses to JOHN, R. threateningly.*)

Well, Miller, I never expected to meet you in the Psi Sigma house again.

JOHN (*with a weak smile*)

Oh, hello, Hoyt.

JULIA

Have you been there together before?

HOYT

Oh, yes, indeed. Miller used to be more bashful in those days. He wasn't such a ladies' man.

[JOHN is unable to answer.]

MARGIE

Oh, John wasn't a member of the *fraternity*, then.

HOYT

A member of *what* fraternity?

MAGPIE

Why, we just pledged him. Note the button.

HOYT (*looking at JOHN, as JOHN fingers lapel proudly*)

No! Well, he must have changed since I knew him.

JULIA

Oh, well, when you knew him, he wasn't such a great athlete.

JOHN

What?

[JULIA gives him the "high sign" over HOYT's shoulder.

JULIA

I've just been telling Spike what a wonderful athlete you are *now*, Jack.

JOHN

Oh, yes . . . I suppose I have changed.

[As HOYT looks at him, he puts his foot carelessly on the top of the stool, missing it the first time, but making finally what he considers a dandy gesture.

JULIA (*winking at MARGIE and boys*)

I attribute it to the influence of athletics.

HOYT (*interested*)

So you really go out for athletics, eh?

MARGIE (*joining in the hoax*)

Oh, yes, football season is no more than over, until he's into basketball——

HOYT (*turning to JOHN, respectfully*)

You play football *and* basketball?

JOHN

Oh, yes——

[Taking pipe from his pocket, he sticks it in his mouth with nervous jauntiness.]

HOYT (*seriously*)

Well, well, well. Julia had an idea you were on the track squad, too, Miller. Think you'll get in any of the events tomorrow?

JOHN (*lighting pipe, and puffing rapidly*)

Oh, three or four. Can't get out of it.

HOYT (*impressed*)

Three or four—and you're smoking? Don't you train?

JOHN

Oh, this is just a *pipe*.

[Coughs. Chokes on the smoke, but furtively.]

MAGPIE (*enjoying HOYT's astonishment*)

You oughtn't to go in too many races, John, you might get tired.

MARGIE (*prompting him*)

Why, he *won* four or five races in the All-Ohio—didn't you, John?

JOHN (*wiping his lips with handkerchief*)

Oh, that was nothing—I would have won the half mile too—only a fellow got in front of me and I didn't want to spike him.

HOYT (*impressed*)

Is that so!

MARGIE

How do they come to call you "Spike," Mr. Hoyt?

[JOHN feels a little sick, so he bites the apple which he finds on counter R. of him.]

HOYT

Oh that's unfair to me, Miss Blake—they hung that name on me because I spiked a couple of men last year—but it wasn't my fault—they cut in front of me just as you said, Miller. But you were a sap to pull up—I wouldn't let anybody butt-in in front of me—if I had to cut him to pieces!

JOHN (*trembling inwardly*)

You wouldn't, eh?

HOYT

No! They're supposed to be a full stride ahead before they cut in. But nobody ever *gets* a full stride ahead of *me*!

JOHN

Do you hold them?

HOYT

No—I *out-run* them! And when these fellows tried to cut in and box *me*—I just spiked them, and jumped over them—and I was well within my rights. [JOHN *is beside bookcase down R.* HOYT *L. of him, MARGIE, JULIA, HUB and MAGPIE grouped in front of counter up L. C., so that neither HOYT nor JOHN sees COACH JACKSON and PIERCE enter at this point from door up L. As they join the group, MAGPIE nudges them, and signals silence. They quietly draw back and listen.*

JOHN (*swallowing*)

You just . . . spiked them . . . and jumped over them, heh?

[HOYT *nods vigorously.*

HOYT

No, in two different races.

MARGIE

Oh, John spiked two of them in the *same* race.

MAGPIE

Sure, one with each foot.

HOYT

What? (*Turns back to JOHN suspiciously.*) Say, listen—

JOHN (*nervously*)

One of them fell down, and I stepped on him—and kicked the other one. When I get in a race, I just feel that nothing can stop me.

[*The COACH leans forward.*]

HOYT (*wisely*)

Well, then, why didn't you win that half mile when the fellow got in front of you?

JOHN

He *fell* in front of me—and I didn't want to step on his head— (*HOYT nods agreement with this evidence of humanity.*) I was afraid I'd get my spikes stuck.

HOYT

Say, are you trying to kid me?

[*JOHN nervously sticks pipe in mouth and faces HOYT defiantly.*]

JULIA

Why, no, Mr. Hoyt, don't you think any other boy can spike people except you?

HOYT

I didn't speak to you, Miss Winters.

MAGPIE

There's a loving engaged couple for you.

HOYT (*furiously*)

Engaged? Where do you get that stuff? That's all off, isn't it, Julia?

JULIA (*rising to the situation*)

Well, I should say so—that's ancient history. Isn't it, Jack?

JOHN

Huh? . . .

HOYT (*stepping closer to JOHN*)

Oh—so it's *Jack*, is it? Well, I've got a few words to say to you, Jack—

COACH (*stepping forward between the two*)

Just a minute there, boys—I'm glad to hear that you're so determined about winning all your races, Miller.

JOHN (*looking at him, turns pale and after a pause says*)

Oh. . . . hello. . . . Coach. When did you come in?

COACH (*sternly*)

How does it come you haven't been out on the track for practice this week, Miller?

JOHN

Why, I didn't think I needed it.

HOYT (*furiously*)

What? Say, listen,—

[*Starts toward JOHN. COACH stops him. JOHN grabs stool and points the legs toward HOYT defensively.*]

COACH

Keep still, don't get this fellow mad.

JOHN

What? Oh, no, don't get me mad.

[*Drops stool, puts pipe in mouth.*]

COACH (*turning to JOHN*)

Now, here, just because you won all those races and

spiked all those men, is no sign that you can quit training. We have a meet tomorrow. Put down that pipe!

[JOHN *hastily does so.*]

HOYT (*grabbing the COACH's hand*)

Say, Coach, I'm Hoyt—Captain of Wisconsin, and I want to know if this bird is kidding me. He told me he was going to run in six races tomorrow.

COACH (*enjoying his bomb-shell*)

He's going to run, all right—and he's going to run against *you!*

JOHN

Yes—(*Then realizing what COACH said.*) *What?*

COACH

I say you're going to run against him in the quarter mile and the relay. I guess two quarters will be enough for you, won't it, John?

JOHN

Well, I—(*COACH glares.*) Yes, I guess so.

[*Drops on stool, munches apple desperately.*]

HOYT

I'll say two races will be enough for you, Miller, if you're going to run against me. And remember what I said about *cutting in*. I wasn't kidding!

PIERCE (*takes HOYT by the arm, leads him up to the door*)

It's dinner-time—come on, Hoyt. Bring the girls, fellows.

HOYT

I'm telling you straight, Pierce, if that fellow gets in my way—I'll murder him!

[PIERCE and HOYT *go out upper L.*]

JOHN (*rising nervously*)

You were just joking, weren't you, Coach?

COACH

No, I wasn't. Saunders is ineligible, and Jenkins pulled a tendon today.

JOHN

But I won't be any use to you. You'd be much better off without anybody. I'll just be trampled all over the track.

COACH

I'm the one to decide that. Why, you ran a trial four-forty the other day in fifty-three flat—and then you quit practice!

JOHN

Fifty-three! Well, I won't be able to run it in that *tomorrow*—I feel kind of sick.

[*Nervously bites the apple.*]

COACH

Put that apple down! Runners don't eat between meals.

JOHN

Excuse me. I just wanted to get the *bad taste* of that pipe out of my mouth.

[*Tries to hand the apple to COACH.*]

COACH (*pushing it away*)

I don't want the damn thing. (JOHN *turns away, standing in front of stool down R.*) Just go in tomorrow the way you told Hoyt. Just feel that nothing can stop you. (*He slaps JOHN a terrific jolt on the back, JOHN drops on stool.* COACH *crosses up L.*) So long, fellows.

HUB and MAGPIE (*speaking together*)

So long, Coach.

[COACH *goes out*.

MAGPIE

Come on, John, we'll tell the bunch all about it.

You're the hot stuff tonight—we're proud of you.

[MAGPIE *goes out*.

HUB (*at the door*)

Yes, and you know who got you into this crowd, don't you?

[*Pats himself on the chest and goes out*.

MARGIE (*at the door*)

Hurry, John, they're waiting for us.

[*Follows HUB*.

JULIA (*who has waited C., speaks tensely*)

Jack—did you hear what Spike said?

JOHN (*moving toward her*)

He said he's going to murder me.

JULIA

I mean to me—about our engagement. You've got to get even with Spike Hoyt for me—for us both! Don't you see—it's all coming true—all that you wrote about yourself in your letters. You are a Psi Sigma now, and a track man. Jack, I'm going to give you something to fight for. I'm going to promise you something. I've been engaged to Spike Hoyt, but if you beat him in the race tomorrow, I'll be engaged to *you*— (JOHN *looks startled*.) Kiss me, Jack.

JOHN (*pulling away as JULIA grabs his arm*)

Oh, wait now—you ought to have time to think!

[MARGIE *re-enters up L. in time to see this embrace*.

MARGIE

Coming?—Oh, excuse me.

[*Turns slightly down L.*

JULIA (*still holding JOHN*)

It's all right, dear. Tell her, Jack.

JOHN (*confused and unhappy*)

Yes, it's perfectly proper, I guess. We're engaged—practically.

MARGIE (*showing her disappointment, but rising to the situation*)

Oh, that's wonderful, isn't it?

JULIA

Uh-huh.

JOHN (*painfully*)

Yes. I'm so happy—

[JULIA kisses JOHN emphatically. He tries to smile, then bites the apple, and munching it, keeps on trying to smile as the curtain falls.]

Curtain.

ACT TWO

Scene I

Athletic Field. The Trainer's tent. A shallow tent, with flaps for entrance Left. A rubbing table Center, smaller table with bottles of liniment, a bench at the back and a couple of camp stools. Blankets, sweaters and towels scattered about.

"DOC" SPURNEY, a gruff, sunburned Irishman, is rubbing one of the Ohio State runners, who lies on the rubbing-table Center, with some liniment. Two or three athletes on the bench up Right. There is the sound of a megaphone off at a distance announcing the result of the pole vault—the voice is muffled. It is followed by a few weak cheers for Wisconsin. "DOC" cocks one ear trying to make out the announcement, but continues kneading the boy's legs. The boy half rises to listen.

DOC (*slaps him*)

Lay down there!

PIERCE (*entering from R. through tent flap*)

Hello, Doc—can I get a rub?

DOC

Sure, Wallie. What was that last?

PIERCE

Wisconsin got first and second in the pole vault.

DOC

The Hell they did!

[*Slaps his man, and pushes him off table. The man drops back to bench with the others. PIERCE slides on the table. Men from bench go out L., talking.*

PIERCE

Yep. We're still five points ahead though—and there's the high-jump and the relay left.

DOC

When I was out there just now Wisconsin was winning all three places in the high jump. Our fellows were jumping like they had on lead pants. What is it, your legs?

PIERCE

Yes . . . they'll be calling the relay pretty soon.

DOC (*beginning to rub PIERCE's legs*)

You're trying to do too much, Wallie. Those hurdles are hard races. . . . Coach shouldn't have put you in the hundred, too. I can't keep you men in shape if he's going to work you to death.

[*Slaps PIERCE's leg impatiently. PIERCE winces.*

PIERCE

We needed the points, Doc.

DOC

Well, you've got your share—thirteen points—and now you're goin' in the relay!

[*Another slap.*

PIERCE

We've just got to win the relay! If Wisconsin cops everything in the high jump we'll be four points behind.

DOC

Yep—it all depends on the relay now—and I don't like it with that Miller in there to gum things up!
[*Another slap.*]

PIERCE

Well, don't take it out on *me*! Oh, Miller can run, Doc—he did pretty well to get second against Hoyt in the four-forty.

DOC (*rubbing away*)

He can run, but he's got no guts! *Second* is it? He could have had first if he hadn't let Hoyt scare him.

PIERCE

Oh now, Doc—you know we didn't really expect him to score anything!

DOC

I know it. And I don't expect it now. There's no second place in the *relay*—it's first or nothing! You will run Number Four, won't you?

PIERCE

No. Coach wants me to run first, and Miller last.

DOC

What for?

PIERCE

He figures John lost his nerve when Hoyt came alongside him in the four-forty, and he thinks he'll run better if we give him a lead and get him out in front.

DOC

Well, maybe he will—if he don't see his shadow!

[MAGPIE, *with megaphone, etc., and* COACH, *enter with* JOHN. *One has each arm. He looks dejected. Wears track suit and old "sweat shirt."*]

COACH

Come in here and get a rub. They'll be calling the relay soon.

JOHN

Haven't you got someone else you could put in that relay?

COACH

For the last time—*no, we have not*—and you'll be all right if you just *run*—and don't let me catch you looking around, the way you did in the four-forty!

JOHN

I didn't look around—Hoyt came up beside me.

COACH

And you politely let him pass you! You weren't all in—I know damn well you weren't!

MAGPIE

You ran better than anybody thought you could, at that, John.

COACH

That's no excuse for quitting! When a man gets in a race we expect him to run better than we expect him to!

PIERCE (*rising from table*)

What was the matter, John? When he pulled up to you, you didn't seem to try—you just dropped back.

JOHN

Why. . . . I thought he was going to spike me.

COACH

Did he try to?

JOHN

No . . . but he looked as if he would.

DOC (*disgustedly*)

Oh, my God—I don't know whether to put blinders on him or kill him.

COACH

Oh, so you were just scared, is that it?

JOHN

Well . . . I—I just realized that I couldn't possibly beat a man like Hoyt!

COACH

Why not? You had him beaten up to the last fifty yards.

JOHN

But he wouldn't let me! That's why I don't want to run in this relay—I'll be worse! I just can't run again.

COACH

Why, is there something the matter with you?

JOHN

I've got the worst thing possible the matter with me—

MAGPIE

Did you hurt yourself, John?

JOHN

It's worse than that—

COACH

Well? What is it?

JOHN

Oh I don't like to talk about it.

DOC

“Charley-horse”—likely—but get up here and I'll rub it out of you!

JOHN

You can't do that—it's a mental condition.

MAGPIE

Well, let him rub your head.

PIERCE

Shut up, Magpie—who told you all that, John?

JOHN

Somebody who knows. I just found it out yesterday—that's why I never can do anything.

[*He drops on table Center.*]

COACH

What is? Here—come right out with it—no false modesty!

JOHN (*reluctantly*)

Well—my ego doesn't work right.

COACH

Your what?

JOHN (*impressively*)

My ego. It's impeded.

DOC

Well, you can have it operated on after this race is over—your *legs* are all right, aren't they?

COACH

Who put this fool notion into your head?

JOHN

Julia Winters—and she knows, too—

COACH

Who's Julia Winters?

PIERCE

That girl from Wisconsin!

COACH

Oh—no wonder! She's trying to make you yellow!

JOHN

No—she's mad at Wisconsin—she wants me to win.

[*He shudders. Turns to DOC.*]

COACH

Do you know her, Magpie?

MAGPIE

Yes—she's up there in the box with Margie Blake.

COACH

Go bring her in here. We've got to get this damn fool idea out of his head before the relay.

MAGPIE

All right, Coach.

[*Goes out Left.*]

JOHN (*jumping up*)

Don't bring her in *here*—

COACH

I want to find out about this. "Ego," huh? I don't allow my men to *have* any ego! Get up there and get your legs rubbed.

[JOHN *climbs onto table.*]

DOC

Take off your shirt! I'll rub that yellow streak off your back.

PIERCE (*aside to DOC*)

Don' be mean to him, Doc!

DOC

Well, I got to get after that ego trouble! Must be something like *lumbago*. (JOHN *stands up, back to audience, removes sweat shirt, showing No. Thirteen on his back; sits on table. DOC starts to pull out JOHN's "gym" shirt from pants.*) Take off your shirt!

JOHN

I'd better not undress—if the girls are coming in here?

DOC (*pulling his shirt off*)

Take it off—you can cover up with the towel.

[JOHN *grabs towel* PIERCE *is sitting on at L. end of table, covers his bare breast as he lies down.* DOC *throws towel up.* JOHN *puts it down.* DOC *puts it up again and eyes JOHN severely, as JOHN pulls his pants up a trifle in effort to cover his stomach.*

DOC

You *study* too much, young fellow. No wonder you got "Ego!"

[DOC *prods JOHN's abdomen.*

JOHN

Don't—!

[*Pulls up knees.*

DOC

Don't what?

[*Prods again.*

JOHN

Don't do that!

DOC

Why not?

JOHN

I'm *ticklish*—that's why!

[DOC *turns away in angry disgust.*

PIERCE (*laughing*)

You misunderstood her, John—why, you're a great runner. (*Turns to COACH. Speaks aside.*) I believe she can help him, at that. She has great influence with him.

COACH (*to PIERCE*)

If she's done any damage she'd better undo it, that's all. Look here, Miller, you know you're going to run Number Four in the relay team—don't you?

JOHN (*sitting up*)

Number Four? Why, that's the most important place!

COACH

You bet it is—and we're depending on you to win! Just remember that! Run the way you started out in that four-forty, and then keep on running.

JOHN

But I thought I was going to start—just when I'm used to that gun you go and change me.

COACH

Oh, for God's sake—what makes you so nervous! Look at me—I'm not nervous! (JOHN *looks away frightened.*) Look at me!

JOHN

I saw you.

DOC

Oh—he's all in a cold sweat—hand me that alcohol, Wallie.

[PIERCE *hands him bottle labelled "Alcohol."* DOC *claps it on his back.*

JOHN (*shivering at the cold wetness on his bare back*)

Ooh!—Is that . . . poison?

DOC

No—it's pure grain alcohol—and don't let me catch you drinkin' any either! You're dizzy enough!

[MAGPIE *enters with* JULIA *and* MARGIE *from L.*

MARGIE (*a little embarrassed*)

Hello, John—hello, Wallie.

[JOHN *nods and tries to cover himself with towel. Puts towel over his back, lies down—then finds chest bare and reverses it hastily.*

JULIA

Oh, this is thrilling—right in with the athletes! How cute you look, John!

[JOHN moves the towel nervously.

COACH

Look here, Miss—you—they say you know what's the matter with him?

JULIA

With John? . . . Oh, yes—it's very plain—he has a complex.

COACH

A complex *what*?

JULIA

An inferiority complex.

DOC

Maybe it's in your stomach muscles.

[Feels JOHN's stomach.

JULIA

Oh, no—although such neuroses often cause a physical disturbance thereabouts.

COACH

Whereabout?

JULIA

In the digestive tract.

DOC (*rubbing his stomach*)

Feel anything there?

JOHN (*pulling the towel down to cover his abdomen*)

NO!

MARGIE

She means it is just a mental thing in this case, Coach.

COACH

What's that got to do with running, then—this isn't a debating team!

MARGIE

Oh, look, John—you've got a mole on your leg! That's good luck.

[JOHN pulls blanket around him, which covers table up. DOC puts it down again.]

JOHN (*in horrible embarrassment*)

Couldn't you stand over there, Margie?

[DOC pushes him down on table. The girls have placed themselves one on each side of him, so that JOHN is in constant embarrassment.]

JULIA (*moving over to COACH—lowers her voice*)

Why, Coach,—I'm surprised to hear you say that a mental state has nothing to do with athletics—after all your experience.

COACH

Oh, I've had plenty of mental states—but I never had any fellow before come right out and admit that he's a piece of cheese! Now he's got to run a race in a minute—and you've got him full of this inferiority business. Well—if you're not some kind of a Wisconsin spy or something like that—

MARGIE

Oh, she isn't, Coach—she's rooting for us!

COACH

Well then—fix him up so he can win—or tell me what's the matter with him.

JULIA (*raising her voice a bit*)

I can't fix him up so he can win—unless he rises to it *himself*!

COACH

Well then, for the love of Mike—*Rise, Miller!*

[JOHN starts to rise from table. He has been trying to hear.

DOC (*pushing him down*)

Lay down.

[Continues rubbing.

JULIA

I tried to key him up—I've given him every incentive to win—haven't I, Jack?

[She stands over him and eyes his bare form. JOHN holds towel around him as DOC bends both legs over his head so that JOHN speaks from an almost inverted position.

JOHN

I should say you have!

[JOHN pulls pants to cover legs—then up to cover stomach, finally wraps towel around his waistline desperately.

JULIA

After what I told him he ought to see things from an entirely different point of view.

JOHN (*upside down*)

Oh, yes I do.

JULIA (*turning to COACH, lowers her voice again*)

But it is impossible for an introvert, like John, to respond freely and effectively to external stimuli—

COACH

What did you say he was?

JULIA

An introvert—an emotional introvert.

DOC (*catching these last words and holding JOHN down, speaks to COACH*)

I told you there was something wrong with him from the first. An introvert—for shame!

[Crosses himself in holy horror.]

MARGIE

Oh . . . that's nothing wrong—that's just the type he belongs to.

JULIA

How do you know?

MARGIE

I read about it in that psychology book last night.
COACH (*loudly—getting confusedly angry*)

Well—is it wrong? We won't stand for any immorality around here!

JULIA (*loud*)

No—we have no morality in science!

[DOC, who has been washing his hands, takes towel off JOHN.]

JOHN (*desperately*)

I have some—give me that towel!

[Grabs towel and covers himself. Stoops behind table.]

MAGPIE

Put his shirt on—he's got to run in a minute!

[PIERCE hands him shirt. Goes to door.]

PIERCE

I'll see how they're coming. *[He goes out. JOHN puts on shirt, trying to shield himself behind table. Gets head through armhole.]*

JULIA (*stepping forward*)

Here—I'll help you.

JOHN (*frantically*)

NO! I can do it myself!

[Stoops behind table, tucking shirt in pants.]

JULIA (*turning to COACH*)

That's a good sign—he tries to do something himself—

MARGIE

Well, he's used to putting his shirt on.

[JOHN *turns away from girls with assumed carelessness; tucks shirt in furiously and turns back.*

COACH

Why, hell—young lady—if all this stuff is true—

[JOHN *down to stool, Right.*

JULIA

It isn't stuff I'm telling you, Mr. Coach—it's *science*!

MARGIE (*interrupting with determination*)

But listen, Julia—you've overlooked something! You know some of those introverts become conquerors, just because they hate to be inferior.

COACH

Conquerors?

MARGIE

Yes . . . in the book it says that sometimes they get so mad at themselves for feeling inferior that they just go after things like a madman—and *nothing can stop them*!

COACH

Is that so? Say—didn't you say something like that to Hoyt yesterday, Miller?

JOHN

Oh . . . I was just imagining that.

MARGIE

Well . . . you can imagine it now! Why don't you get a *superiority* complex?

COACH

Now you're talking!

JULIA

Oh that's different—it belongs to another type.

MARGIE (*interrupting*)

But it amounts to the same thing, Julia—he can do it—if he makes up his mind!

COACH

Well—I thought maybe there was a little common sense some place in all this scientific bunk! I know what he needs—just a good stiff talking to, like I give the men before a football game. You're scared, Miller—just plain scared—and what you need is to get *fighting mad!*

JOHN

No, there's no use in getting me mad—Hoyt can get madder in a minute than I can if I tried all day!

COACH (*intensely*)

We'll see about that. (*Pulls JOHN over, pushes him into camp chair. Sets himself and begins a harangue.*) Do you realize that in five minutes you'll be out on that track, that you're the pivot man on our relay team—and that the fate of this meet depends on *you!*

JOHN

There are three other fellows in the relay.

COACH

And they'll all do their duty—it's up to *you!* (*Points his finger at him, and warms to his work.*) Not only the meet, but the relay cup—the Gold Cup! You know that—Wisconsin has won it twice—if they win it again—they keep it! *You* must stop them.

JOHN (*cringeing*)

Couldn't you . . . talk to somebody else now for awhile?

COACH

No . . . I'm talking to you. If we lose it—you're responsible! *You* quit practice last week without permission! *You* dropped the four-forty when you had it in your pocket! You are going to run *last* for our team! (JOHN *squirms*.) Here's Magpie—he'll be out there leading cheers for *you*! The eyes of *five thousand people* will all be centered right on you—if our new stadium were finished there would be fifty thousand—fifty thousand people—counting your steps, running with you—breathing with you—*winning* with you! And if you don't come through—if you don't *win*, you'll be ashamed ever to show your face again! (JOHN *drops his head in agony*.) You'll be pointed at as the man who was afraid to be spiked! If you ever have any *children* . . .

[JOHN *gives* COACH a look of sharp reproof and "shushes" him.

COACH (*correcting himself*)

Or *grandchildren*—how will they feel when the Gold Cup is mentioned?

JOHN (*desperately*)

They *might* not mention it.

COACH

Oh, yes—they'd have to say, "My father . . . was afraid . . . he was full of *mental states*."—They would have to say—"My father didn't care for his University, or his friends, or his team, or his girl, or his *honor*—or his *Coach*! He was willing to sacri-

fice us all—because he was afraid of a little thing like being *spiked!*”

JOHN (*rising in nervous desperation*)

My God—don't say any more!—I'll *win*—if they cut me to pieces!

COACH

Ah! . . . Atta-boy!

[*Steps back.*]

PIERCE (*entering*)

The high jump's over—they took everything. It's time to call the relay.

COACH

They'll call it. Come on, Doc. All right . . . don't forget what you said, young fellow.

JOHN (*looking at MARGIE*)

All right, I'm ready.

JULIA

That's the old Spartan spirit, John.

JOHN (*crossing to her*)

Oh Julia . . . you know what you said last night.

JULIA

Yes . . . and I meant it—if you beat Spike!

JOHN

Oh . . . I'm not going to hold you to that, Julia—

JULIA (*sternly*)

I mean it—(*goes to flap of tent*) and you must win!

Come back *with* your shield—or *on it*, Jack!

[*She goes out.*]

PIERCE (*going over to him and slapping his shoulder*)

Come on, John. (*He goes out.*)

[COACH *eyes* JOHN, *makes a vigorous gesture of punching one fist into other palm, and follows.*

JOHN'S *nerves* get him as he *imitates the* COACH'S

punch desperately—and he breaks into hysterical laughter—turning away from MARGIE. MARGIE stands watching JOHN, whose head is sunk in his hands. Suddenly he stretches out in agony, and drops flat on the trainer's table—sobbing.

MARGIE (*putting her hand on his shoulder*)

John. . . .

JOHN (*sobbing*)

Oh, what am I going to do! What am I going to do!

MARGIE

Oh, what am I going to do? (*MARGIE looks around, worried, sees glass of water on table, picks it up. Her eye catches the alcohol, she takes it—smells it, puts her tongue to it, and pours a little into the water.*) Here, John—pull yourself together!

[He sits up, still shaking.]

MARGIE

Here, drink this!

[He takes glass, drinks, and chokes a bit.]

JOHN

Oh—what is that?

MARGIE

It won't hurt you—it's just some—aromatic spirits of ammonia. Now, John—you mustn't break down like this. I thought you were going to win!

JOHN (*brokenly*)

Oh, I don't know what to do!

MARGIE

Well . . . if you can't—perhaps it's wrong to make you try so hard. I'm not going to urge you to. I don't think it's right to make it a matter of life and death—

JOHN (*tensely—trying to regain control*)

Oh, but it is!

MARGIE

No, it isn't. The world isn't going to come to an end . . . and people will soon forget about it, no matter what you do!

JOHN

Oh, no they won't.

MARGIE

Yes, they will. Why, I'd like you just as well if you never won anything.

JOHN

You would?

MARGIE (*soothing him*)

Of course.—Now don't be so frightened.

JOHN (*rising*)

I'm not frightened—of Hoyt—I've made up my mind to that now—I don't care if he does murder me—but—but—

MARGIE

Well then, what's the matter?

JOHN (*shakes head in a daze*)

I don't *know*! I just feel as if I *can't* run that race. I know I've got to—they're all counting on me—the fellows, and the Coach—and Julia—do you know what she said to me last night?

MARGIE

What?

JOHN

She told me if I won this race—if I beat Spike Hoyt—she'd marry me!

MARGIE

Well, that ought to be enough to make you win.

JOHN

Yes . . . it ought to . . . I can't understand why
I feel—this way—I just feel—*paralyzed!*

MARGIE (*looking at him questioningly*)

John . . . you do love Julia—don't you?

JOHN (*startled*)

What?

MARGIE

I say you do love Julia—don't you?

JOHN (*with the earnestness of the unsure*)

Why, yes—of course I love her—only—

MARGIE

Only what?

JOHN (*breaks out hysterically again*)

She makes me so darned *nervous!* Oh, I didn't mean that— (*Paces up and down.*) Of course I love her—that's funny, isn't it? For a fellow like me not to be sure he loves a wonderful girl like Miss Wisconsin! Of course I love her! I love her . . . something *terrible*. And I've got to win now for her—she's going to *marry* me if I win—Oh My God! [*He suddenly breaks down again and drops sobbing into a chair.*]

MARGIE (*comes over to him swiftly, like a mother to a hurt child, pats him, puts her arm around him*)

Don't, John—don't! Come on now—buck up, old man!

JOHN

I can't—I can't! (*Off-stage call: "Places for the relay!" She leans over and lifts his head, and kisses him, slowly. He suddenly quiets down, rises slowly and looks at her strangely. Speaks with terrific*

gravity.) You don't know what that did for me—I feel all right now.

MARGIE

Are you sure?

JOHN (*wide-eyed*)

Yes . . . *wonderful!!* Excuse me, won't you. . . . I wouldn't want anybody to know that I acted like that just now, but just for a minute it came over me as if . . . if I didn't love Julia—but I love her now! I can *feel* it!

MARGIE

Of course you do—

JOHN (*stretching his arms wide*)

I never felt like this before—as if I was on wings—or something.

[*Off-stage we hear the last call for the relay.*]

MARGIE

You're going to win now—for her!

JOHN (*holding MARGIE's hand in passionate resolve*)

Yes, my dear—(*realizes dimly*) yes, that's right, *for Her!*

[*He straightens up, relinquishes her hands, and goes to battle—a consecrated knight. Breaks into a dog-trot as:*

The curtain falls.

As curtain falls we hear the crowd singing "Carmen Ohio"; the song continues until curtain rises on Scene 2.

Scene II

The track in front of the boxes, in a corner of the Stadium.

The front part of the stage is the cinder track, running across Right to Left. The start and finish line is dead center. Above the track a narrow strip of grass with a bench right and one left for the competing athletes. Between these benches steps lead up to the raised platform of the boxes, which is backed by a solid wall, with trees and sky behind. In the box R. of center we see what seems to be the party of the President of the University. The other boxes (there are four in all) are filled with students and faculty members. A railing runs off R. and L. above the track, with rooters crowded behind it on each side of the stage.

MARGIE and JULIA are discovered in box, left of center. Other members of the cast, and extras, are in the other boxes. MAGPIE is in the little quadrangle R., where he leads cheers. Two Wisconsin runners are seated on the bench in the quadrangle left, tightening their shoelaces, etc. MAGPIE is leading the song "Carmen Ohio," which ends as curtain rises. Crowd standing hats in hands, sit at end of song.

MAGPIE (leading cheer)

All right now, bunch. Let's give them an "O-hio"—
Ready—hip—hip—

CROWD

O-O-O-O-

H-H-H-H-

I-I-I-I-

O-O-O-O-

OHIO!

[The Crowd applauds and whistles as MAGPIE "talks it up."

[Off-stage R. the ANNOUNCER is heard calling through his megaphone.

ANNOUNCER

"The next and last event is the one-mile relay race. The score in this dual meet now stands Wisconsin 68—Ohio State 64. The team winning the relay scores five points. As there are only two entries, there will be no score allowed for second place."

MAGPIE (*seizing his megaphone, addresses the crowd*)

Did you hear that—Wisconsin 68—Ohio State 64! If we get this relay, we win the meet! The Gold Cup depends on this race! Come on now—let's give 'em a locomotive! Ready!

[He leads the cheer with extravagant gestures.

THE CROWD (*very slowly*)

Rah . . . rah . . . rah . . . rah . . . Ohio State, Ohio State! (*Slightly faster.*) Rah, rah, rah, rah, Ohio State, Ohio State! (*Faster.*) Rah-rah-rah-rah—Ohio State—Ohio State! (*Very fast and loud.*) Rah-rah-rah-rah—Ohio State—Ohio State! (*Then as MAGPIE leaps, the crowd rises, with a whistle.*) Wheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee! BOOM OHIO!

[MAGPIE turns a handspring on "BOOM." Crowd sits again. The two Wisconsin runners begin to jog up and down, lifting their knees high, warming up. Two Ohio State runners appear from Right and begin to warm up; they are greeted by scattered cheers. HOYT and the fourth Wisconsin runner appear from left and begin to warm up. HOYT prances up in front of the boxes.

MARGIE (*pointing for JULIA's benefit*)

There's Spike Hoyt!

JULIA

I see him. (*She pretends not to notice him as he looks at her. As he turns and repasses, she says:*)

Oh—hello, Spike!

HOYT (*sore*)

Hello, yourself.

[*Prances on past and off R. COACH JACKSON, accompanied by DOC, HUB SMITH and the OFFICIAL STARTER, MR. STONE, appear from R. and take place center. PROF. DEMING with "Official" ribbon pinned on lapel is in box R. C. HUB and COACH have stop-watches. PROFESSOR carries the "tape" for finish. STONE has revolver.*]

COACH

All right, Mr. Stone—get them started. Where's Pierce and Miller?

DOC

Don't ask me.

[*PIERCE appears from right, and is greeted by cheers. He begins to warm up.*]

MAGPIE (*shouting*)

Knock 'em dead—Wallie!

STARTER

All right, you fellows—get your places!

[*The seven men gather left of center. PIERCE begins to dig his holes, on downstage side of track.*]

HOYT

Hey—wait a minute—who gave you the pole?

STARTER (*spins a coin*)

Toss for it.

PIERCE

Call it, Hoyt!

HOYT

Heads!

STARTER

It's tails.

HOYT

All right—go ahead.

[PIERCE smiles and resumes digging. This is done with foot, the spikes digging a transverse trench. Other five men move extreme left, "loosening up."

PIERCE (*looking around*)

Where's Miller?

DOC (*looking around*)

Ain't he here?

[JOHN enters from right, striding high. He bumps into the COACH, as COACH has back turned, explaining something to Wisconsin Official. COACH gives him an impatient push that almost upsets him.

COACH

Hey—they're waiting for you!

[Turns.

JOHN

Oh, excuse me!

STARTER

Get down here—you!

JOHN

Well, I've got to warm up.

[Prances a bit off R. and returns, stepping high.

COACH

Bring your knees up!

[JOHN prances knees almost to his chin.

JULIA (*leaning over rail, waves her handkerchief in his face*)

Hello, John! (JOHN *shies away, and bends his head so that he hits himself on chin, holds his chin. The crowd laughs.*) Aren't you going to speak to me?

JOHN

I bit my tongue!

STARTER

Hey—get over here!

JOHN

Certainly. I didn't know you were ready. (JOHN *moves over to lower side of track at start line. HOYT begins to dig holes and kick cinders over JOHN, getting one in his eye.*) Hey, you're getting them in my eyes!

HOYT

Well, are you too lazy to blink?

[*Continues digging.*]

DOC

That starting line don't look straight to me.

[*Goes to upstage side, stoops and squints. HOYT gives JOHN a final face-full and steps back. JOHN, not seeing DOC, turns back and begins kicking cinders at HOYT; they hit DOC in the face.*]

DOC

Hey, what the hell are you doing!

JOHN (*in confusion*)

Oh, I didn't know it was you! I'm digging a hole.

[DOC *walks over and looks at him severely, examines hole.*]

HOYT (*laughing scornfully. Stepping in front of box; addresses JULIA*)

That bird will get plenty of cinders kicked in his face when he runs against me.

MARGIE

You'll have to be in front to do that.

HOYT

I'll be in front, all right—don't worry! (*Turns to JULIA.*) I suppose you're rooting for him, eh? Well, you saw what I did to him in the four-forty, didn't you?

DOC (*to JOHN*)

And you don't need any holes—*you're* not starting—Pierce is!

JOHN

Oh—that's right. (*Moves over to box.*) It's too bad I won't get to run against Mr. Hoyt again, Pierce is running first.

HOYT

What's that? Hey—wait a minute!

STARTER

You're starting for your team, aren't you, Hoyt?

HOYT

Just a minute! Where is this bird running?

JULIA

Jack is running last—in the place of honor!

MARGIE

What's that got to do with you, Mr. Hoyt?

HOYT

It's got a whole lot to do with me. Wait, Starter, I'm going to change the order of our team.

STARTER

What's that?

JOHN (*anxiously*)

Oh, that's all right—I'm satisfied—even if I *don't* get a chance to beat you.

HOYT

I wouldn't rob you of that pleasure. Here, Starter—Simms will run first, and I'm last! (STARTER *whispers in ear of SIMMS, his team-mate.*) Well, anyway—but make up your mind.

[SIMMS *takes place at starting line; measures his holes. PIERCE does likewise below him.*

JOHN (*coming over hastily*)

Maybe I *had* better run *first*!

COACH (*shouting*)

Oh, shut up! Get them started, Mr. Stone.

[PROFESSOR *coming down from box, stands with HUB up C.*

STARTER (*placing himself behind the start line—i.e., left of it*)

Now you men understand, you get ten yards each side—(*Points off R.*) to transfer the baton. (*He hands a polished stick to PIERCE and SIMMS. JOHN stands in middle of track, looking at stick in deathly fascination.*) Hey, don't stand on the track, Miller—get to one side—you're number four! Now you fellows get in order, at each side. Number two—number three—number four—like that; then as you see your man coming with the stick—(*He points off L.*) don't run back of that line to meet him—or you're disqualified.

[*Ohio men file in downstage, Wisconsin above.*

HOYT

Oh, we know all that!

DOC

Well, don't forget it! Do *you* understand, Miller?

JOHN (*R.C.*)

Yes, but—you can start to run, can't you?

COACH (*stepping up R. of JOHN*)

Sure, start to run—as your man gets close to the finish—but remember he has to give you the baton between these two lines!

[*Points to line L. of start, and to line off R.*]

JOHN

But that's only ten yards each side. He might not catch up to me.

PIERCE

Oh, he'll— (*Pointing at Ohio's No. 3 man*) catch up to you all right. Don't be so nervous, John.

JOHN

I'm not nervous—I'm just afraid I might run too *fast*.

HOYT (*nudging SIMMS*)

Did you hear that one—he's afraid he'll run too *fast*! He ought to have brakes on!

[*Grins at JULIA.*]

COACH

Just be sure that you've got a good hold on the baton—before the other fellow lets go of it!

JOHN

That's the trouble—that stick looks slippery!

DOC (*viciously*)

What!

JOHN

I'm afraid I might drop it!

HOYT

Give him some rubber gloves.

DOC

If you drop it, you'll never live to drop another one!

JOHN

I know it—but that's no comfort to me.

[DOC makes a "pass" at him. JOHN crosses below runners to L.

COACH

All right, Doc—places! Ready, Mr. Stone? (*The OFFICIAL nods. HUB and PROFESSOR begin to stretch tape.*) Here, wait a minute—don't put the tape up until the last two men have started—just for the last lap.

JOHN

And hold it up high—so I won't trip over it.

[HOYT glares at him.

STARTER and DOC

Shut up!

[JOHN retires to bench up L. with other runners.

STARTER

All right, men. On your marks! (*PIERCE and SIMMS crouch at the start. The other runners and the crowd lean forward tensely.*) Get set! (*Both men rise in a tense crouch. Just an instant before the gun, SIMMS starts and both "break," beating the gun. STARTER immediately fires a second shot, recalling them. The two men jog back, a trifle shame-faced.*) Here, come back here—what's the matter with you? You both broke—so I won't penalize you—but remember if I catch either one of you this next time—it's two yards back you'll start.

JOHN (*trembling with excitement*)

Good Lord, I'm glad that wasn't me!

STARTER

Shut up. Now—On your marks— (*They crouch.*)
Get set—

[*Same business.*]

BANG!

[*As the gun is fired, both men are off and disappear off R. PIERCE gets a slight lead on the jump.*]

MARGIE (*shouting as she watches off R.*)

Wallie's ahead. Look at him go around that curve—

MAGPIE (*addressing crowd*)

Come on now—a Pierce rah—quick!

THE CROWD

Pierce Rah—Pierce Rah—Rah—rah—PIERCE!

(*Note: Crowd follows MAGPIE's eyes as he "points" the course of the race. Constant noise and talk from the crowd.*)

MAGPIE (*pointing straight out front*)

Look at him go—he's got five yards on him!

[MAGPIE points out runners' progress. Crowd follows him.]

JULIA

What do you think of that, Spike?

SPIKE

Oh, Pierce is their *best man*—wait till we get started!

JOHN (*jumping out on track beside the waiting Wisconsin No. 2.*)

Oh, Lord, I hope I don't drop that stick.

DOC (*pushing him*)

Get back—it isn't your next—you damn fool—it's *him!*

[*Pulls Ohio No. 2 out.*]

MARGIE (*pointing off L.*)

Here they come!

[*Excitement and constant yells from crowd, now on its feet.*]

MAGPIE (*screaming*)

Come on, Pierce—hold that lead! Hold that lead!

THE CROWD

Come on, Wallie—that-a-boy, Pierce—hold that lead—keep coming, *etc., etc.*

[PIERCE dashes on as No. 2 starts. They transfer stick and No. 2 is off to a flying start. A moment behind comes SIMMS, and the second Wisconsin man is off on the trail.]

HOYT (*yelling*)

Go get him, Mark—he's easy! Get ready, kid—Marky will give you a lead!

[He slaps Wisconsin No. 3, who edges out on track. HUB throws a blanket around PIERCE, who has dropped on the Ohio bench.]

MARGIE (*leaning over*)

Good work, Wallie! (*He smiles.*) Oh, look—(*MAGPIE shouts. MARGIE points front.*) Wisconsin is catching up to us!

[PIERCE rises and watches anxiously.]

MAGPIE (*pointing front*)

He's passing!

[*Crowd groans and shows that Wisconsin is ahead. Nearly everyone sits down.*]

THE WISCONSIN CROWD

Yes—Marky—yeah—Marky! Go to it, boy, *etc., etc.*

PIERCE

Pete is hanging right with him!

HOYT (*excitedly—points to left curve*)

That's the kid, Marky— (*Slaps No. 3.*) He's got a lead!

JOHN

Maybe he'll slip!

HOYT (*coaching No. 3 Wisconsin*)

Ready now—kid—here he comes! (*The Wisconsin and Ohio Nos. 3 are ready at the line.*) All right—start.

[*Wisconsin No. 3 starts as No. 2 dashes in and he is off. Very close behind, Ohio No. 2 transfers stick and No. 3 is off. Crowd cheers as JONES starts fast. Crowd still discouraged as Wisconsin comes in five yards ahead.*]

MAGPIE

Come on, Jonesie—catch him! Look at that boy run. He's right on his heels.

[*Excitement grows as JONES gains.*]

THE CROWD

Come on, Jones—pass him—go around him—*etc.*, *etc.*

DOC (*sharply*)

You're next, Miller!

HOYT (*getting ready himself*)

I'll say he's next!

[*JOHN looks nervous and runs up and down.*]

MAGPIE (*leaps in air*)

Look at that!

[*Points across the field. Crowd cheers spontaneously.*]

MARGIE (*pounding JULIA*)

Look—Jonesie's ahead of him.

[*Crowd to feet, cheering JONES in the lead.*]

PIERCE

He's gaining every step! He'll give you a good lead, John.

JOHN

I'll need it all right.

[Begins to run backward nervously.]

DOC

Hey—don't cross that line!

[JOHN jumps back as from hot metal.]

MARGIE

Good luck, John!

JULIA (*sharply*)

Run—Jack! Here he comes!

[JOHN nervously starts to run ahead Right.]

PIERCE and MAGPIE

Wait!

COACH

Get back there—you've got a ten-yard lead! NOW!

[JOHN retreats Left—sees JONES; starts R. JONES dashes on, and as JOHN tries too nervously to grab the stick, he drops it. There is a wail from the crowd, as he scrambles for it. Meanwhile HOYT has waited surely for his man and gets a flying start; just as JOHN finally grabs the stick from the ground, he darts past. Wails from the crowd.]

JOHN (*as he scrambles*)

Oh, God help me—

[He is off on HOYT'S heels. Groans and reproaches from crowd.]

DOC

Kill him, Coach—you're closer to him!

MARGIE (*screaming*)

Run, John!

JULIA

Oh, the idiot—what made him drop it!

DOC

I knew he'd do it—

COACH

The damn fool—he'll never catch Hoyt now!

THE CROWD (*muttering*)

The poor sap—wouldn't you know he'd do that—
losing that big lead—run, you oilcan—run! etc.

PIERCE (*pointing front*)

He's sticking with him! Hoyt isn't gaining any
more.

MAGPIE

But he'll never catch him!

MARGIE

Yes, he will. Yes, he will—why don't you *cheer*?

THE WISCONSIN CROWD

Come on, Hoyt—that-a-boy—keep going—yeah,
Hoyt!

[*From here on the wildest growing excitement and
hectic shouting, yells, pleading, etc.*]

MAGPIE

My God—Miller's caught up to him!

PIERCE (*looking off L. curve*)

You can't tell on the curve.

MAGPIE

Yes, he has—come on, Miller.

MARGIE (*leading the crowd*)

Come on, Miller—come on, Miller.

[*Wildest yells of all.*]

COACH

They can't hold that pace! Stretch that tape—
Prof, here they come!

[*The PROFESSOR and Wisconsin Official tighten the tape.*

MAGPIE

They're abreast! Come on, Miller!

ALL THE WISCONSIN RUNNERS and CROWD

Come on, Hoyt!

ALL THE OHIO ROOTERS

Come on, Miller!!

DOC

They're falling down—they're cracking. Come on, Miller!

[*The two runners, so exhausted that their pace has slowed a bit, burst into view, JOHN one yard ahead. They fall and roll over the finish together. HOYT springs to his feet, apparently the winner. The crowds drop to excited chatter, uncertain of result. The three Wisconsin runners rush out to HOYT, cover him with blanket and carry him Right with cheers.*

WISCONSIN RUNNERS

Attaboy, Spike—looks like you won it—great! *etc.*

HOYT

Ouch—my leg—he spiked me!

MAGPIE (*through megaphone to crowd*)

Hush—wait for the decision.

[*He and PIERCE and other Ohio runners crowd over to extreme left, where officials are in group talking excitedly among themselves.*

ONE OF THE WISCONSIN MEN (*crossing Left to officials*)

Wait a minute—our man has a kick here—

MARGIE (*who has run down to JOHN, raising him up from his prostrate position R. C.*)

Oh, John—I thought you won!

JOHN (*a little groggy—looks off up from prone position*)

JULIA (*running from box to HOYT*)

Oh, Spike, you were wonderful!

[JULIA, HOYT and Wisconsin runners group R. about HOYT.]

PIERCE (*impatiently*)

Well—who wins?

STARTER (*seizing megaphone*)

Miller wins—Ohio State wins!

[*Cheering!*]

MARGIE

Listen, John—you did win!

[JOHN *smiles happily, tries to rise*, MAGPIE, HUB and PIERCE *dash up to JOHN*, others follow; *grouping right—athletes, COACH, DOC, PROFESSOR, etc.* Crowd *yells wildly.*]

MAGPIE (*pouncing on him*)

John—you're the cat's pants! You won!

JOHN (*sits up, gasping, as they pull him to feet*)

What?

[*They crowd around.*]

HUB and PIERCE

(*Shouts, as he and MAGPIE pull JOHN to his feet.*)

You won the race, John, old kid—you won!

[*Hush. As crowd hushes slightly and JOHN looks around happily, JULIA rushes to R. C. and stops dramatically.*]

JULIA

John—you won! Oh, my dear.

JOHN (*collapsing*)

Oh, my God!

[*Loud cheer as curtain falls. The boys catch him and fan him as crowd cheers.*]

Curtain.

ACT THREE

The living-room of the Psi Sigma House.

A good-looking room in dark oak wainscoting and beams, decorated for a dance.

Double doors up center show a hall running off Right and Left. A sofa is seen in this hall.

A French window, R., opens upon a porch, which is dimly seen. Up L. on a table against the wall, are plates of sandwiches, a grand piano down R, with a sofa against the wall up R. A sofa L. C. backed by a narrow table with a pretty lamp, a fireplace L. with a picture above it, of a gentleman of the 1850 period, the founder of the fraternity. Silver and bronze cups on the mantel, a bronze plaque or two over the mantel and another on the wall of the hall. Several large, square banners on the walls above the wainscoting: Ohio State, Wisconsin, Illinois, etc. (No small triangular pennants.)

Dance Music is heard off L. There is a group scattered about the stage, eating sandwiches, drinking punch and chattering. Some are talking about the result of the track meet, congratulating WALLIE PIERCE, remarking on JACK MILLER'S surprising achievement, etc. Another group consisting of the PROFESSOR, HUB, and BETTY are up L. of the C. door. They are talking about BETTY'S dress, a subject which she finds very interesting. REGGIE is also in this group. Another

group with HELEN, another girl and two of the Ohio runners, down R. about the piano. MARGIE is quietly seated on the sofa down L.

As the dance music starts, the FRESHMAN enters from up C., and goes to REGGIE.

FRESHMAN

Reggie, can I have this dance?

REGGIE

No, I'm sorry.

[Goes to HELEN, R.]

FRESHMAN

Helen, may I have this dance?

HELEN

I'll let you have the eighteenth.

FRESHMAN

Thank you. *(Goes to Betty up L. C.)* Betty, may—

BETTY

Why, no, I'm sorry, Norry, but it's taken.

FRESHMAN

May I have the next one?

BETTY

Oh, all right, the next one.

[Goes to MARGIE. Music starts—off L. Others troop out to dance.]

FRESHMAN *(to MARGIE)*

Can I have this dance?

MARGIE

I'm a little tired.

FRESHMAN

You haven't danced much this evening.

MARGIE

That's why.

PROFESSOR

Miss Blake is going to sit out this dance with me.

FRESHMAN

Ever since the first dance, I haven't been able to get any.

PROFESSOR

Help yourself to some sandwiches, Norton.

FRESHMAN

I've had a lot of them. They're good. If I get this dance in, maybe I'll be able to eat some more.

[*Goes out.*]

MARGIE

I'm afraid I'm not very entertaining this evening, Professor.

PROFESSOR (*sitting beside MARGIE*)

I've been thinking of what you told me. You say Julia really promised John that if he won that race, she would marry him?

MARGIE (*worried*)

That's what he told me.

PROFESSOR

It seems ridiculous though, doesn't it?

MARGIE

Well . . . Julia is just the kind of girl John needs, I guess. She'll make a big man of him. And Mr. Deming—don't you think John *needs* someone to spur him on—make him do things?

PROFESSOR (*thoughtfully, with a touch of sarcasm*)

No, I don't think so, but then perhaps I'm prejudiced. You see, I happened to get a wife who just let me do the things I liked to do. . . . Unfortunately, do doubt.

MARGIE

Well . . . *You* came out all right.

PROFESSOR

Yes . . . but we had some pretty hard times—my wife had to go through some lean years with me. An old-fashioned custom, my dear.

MARGIE

Oh . . . I'll bet *she* didn't mind!

PROFESSOR

No. . . . I don't believe she did. . . . I don't like to see John take this step—without thought . . .

MARGIE (*quickly*)

If he *thought*, he wouldn't take it—I mean—

PROFESSOR (*thinking*)

Of course one should not interfere—

[*She shakes her head. The PROFESSOR does likewise.*]

MARGIE (*worried*)

Oh, no. It wouldn't be loyal to Julia, would it?

PROFESSOR

Well, that is a matter of—metaphysics. . . . But a man should make these decisions *for himself*.

MARGIE

Oh, yes, of course—(*Nods—he imitates.*) but it's so hard to get John to decide *right*!

PROFESSOR (*smiling wisely*)

I think, my dear, that perhaps you could—I wouldn't say “indicate” to John—

MARGIE

Oh, I wouldn't *indicate*—

[*Shakes head: “no.” PROFESSOR imitates her gravely.*]

PROFESSOR

But you might perhaps—well—*precipitate*. . . .

MARGIE

Well—maybe I could do that—I wouldn't do a thing to interfere with John's—I mean with *their* happiness . . . but there's one thing I do hate to see John give up!

PROFESSOR (*sympathetically*)

What's that, my dear?

MARGIE

His Algæ.

PROFESSOR

What?

MARGIE

He was telling me about his collection of Algæ. He says they're the most important things in the whole world! What are Algæ?

PROFESSOR

Well, have you ever noticed the scum on ponds?

MARGIE

Yes—

PROFESSOR

Well—that's Algæ.

MARGIE (*disappointed*)

Oh—is that all?

PROFESSOR

But they are important. (*HELEN and one of the Ohio Runners tiptoe in, making for the porch. PROFESSOR and MARGIE are turned left silently. PROFESSOR hears them, and as they get R. C., speaks without turning.*) Good evening!

BOY (*embarrassed*)

Oh—good evening!

[*Gets to door R.*

HELEN (*startled*)

Oh, good evening, Professor! (*Follows BOY out, speaks as she goes out.*) How the Hell did he know we were in here?

PROFESSOR

Margie, I wonder if it's really the Algæ that you're worried about?

MARGIE (*hesitates*)

Well . . . I want him to be happy.

[*Drops her head.*]

PROFESSOR

So do I . . . but I'm not quite sure what to do about it. John has always wanted to be like these other boys—he has been unhappy because he was not—shall we say, *standardized*?

MARGIE (*with a tiny sniffle*)

You mean, like a Ford?

PROFESSOR

Exactly. All these boys he admires are standardized—they think alike, they look alike; they become bond salesmen, or real estate men. Of course in my day it was different. But don't you worry about it. I dare-say Julia was only joking about marrying him.

MARGIE (*hopefully*)

Oh, do you think so?

PROFESSOR (*encouragingly*)

Yes—and if she wasn't, she'll think better of it. College romances usually . . . don't happen.

MARGIE (*brightening up*)

Well . . . you've made me feel a lot better.

PROFESSOR (*in tones of a conspirator*)

And if anything does happen—you and I will have to—er . . . *precipitate* something. Now—

[*Music ends. Enter, chattering, BETTY and FRESHMAN, HUB, REGGIE and PIERCE and others. MAGPIE enters from up R., removes flannel case and holds aloft the gold cup, standing center.*]

MAGPIE

Here, bunch, rub your eyes and look at this!

MARGIE (*Crosses to MAGPIE*)

Oh, the Gold Cup— isn't it beautiful?

PIERCE

How did you get it up here, Magpie?

MAGPIE

They just brought it from the engraver's. Here, Margie, put it on the piano.

[*She does so. All look and exclaim.*]

MARGIE

Oh, this is quite an honor!

[*Simultaneously FRESHMAN and BETTY separate from the crowd and move left toward punch bowl.*]

MAGPIE (*to HUB. Points at BETTY*)

She's a peach, isn't she?

HUB

Oh, she's with Norrie—let him alone.

MAGPIE

That freshman—! No—I've got to have her. (*He has his eye on BETTY.*) The next dance is mine, isn't it, Betty?

BETTY (*as the FRESHMAN shakes his head at her*)

Why, no, I'm sorry, but it's Norrie's.

[*Doorbell off Right.*]

MAGPIE (*with upper-class authority*)

Answer the door, Frosh.

FRESHMAN

Aw, say, listen—

MAGPIE

You heard me!

[FRESHMAN exits R. sulkily, after pantomiming protest to MAGPIE without result.]

BETTY (*making the best of it*)

Aren't freshmen funny?

[Smiles encouragement at MAGPIE and tastes punch.]

PIERCE joins HUB, L.

REGGIE (*from near piano*)"Freshman"—what do you think *you* are, Betty?

MAGPIE

Now, don't be catty.

BETTY

Oh, there's no punch in this punch!

MAGPIE (*loudly*)

What do you think we are, a bunch of drunkards?
(*Then quietly, showing her flask in his pocket.*)
Come out on the porch and I'll fix you up.

BETTY

Oh, I'd just love to see the moon.

[*They go out Right to porch, gaily.* FRESHMAN
enters from up Center.]

FRESHMAN

Where's Betty?

HUB

She went out with Magpie to get a little moonshine.

FRESHMAN

Oh, I wish Magpie would get a girl of his own.

[*Goes out glumly to porch.*]

REGGIE

Say, where is this Miller boy, Wallie—I want to meet
him?

[*Music starts.*]

PIERCE

He'll be here all right—I left him upstairs, dolling up in Hub's coat and Magpie's white flannels.

REGGIE

Oh, I thought he was with Julia Winters.

[HOYT enters, walking lame. Looks at the bunch sulkily.

PROFESSOR

Come in, Brother Hoyt.

[Shakes hands, using fraternity "grip."

REGGIE and HUB

Good evening.

PIERCE

Hello, Hoyt.

HOYT

Hello, yourself.

PROFESSOR

I'm glad you're here. I had a hard time inducing Hoyt to come.

HOYT

I had a hard time to walk. But I won't stay long; I'm getting out on the twelve-thirty.

HUB

What's the matter, are you sore, Hoyt?

HOYT

Say, who wouldn't be sore, after the deal I got this afternoon? (MARGIE quietly walks out down R. to porch. MAGPIE and BETTY enter from porch.)

PROFESSOR

I'm sorry you feel that way, Mr. Hoyt—but your own coach agreed you were at fault. He said he had warned you before about interfering.

HOYT (*feeling leg painfully*)

He didn't warn me that this bird Miller was a mowing machine. You ought to see my leg where he spiked me in that mix-up at the finish.

JULIA (*entering Center in time to hear last line*)

Really, Mr. Hoyt? Well, you're the one who put this spiking idea into John's head.

HOYT (*turning*)

That's right—stick up for that murderer!

MAGPIE (*winking at JULIA*)

Why, Julia—that isn't showing the right feeling for your fiancé!

[*The group giggles.*]

JULIA (*to MAGPIE*)

Fiancé! Doesn't it occur to you that that is a title to which he has lost the right— (*To HUB*) through his own choice?

HOYT

What do you mean?

JULIA

You know what I mean—you big dumb-bell! (*As others giggle JULIA approaches him and hisses in a whisper.*) Didn't you break off our engagement yesterday, right in front of everybody?

HOYT (*aloud, in his excitement*)

Oh, you ought to have known I didn't mean that. I was mad.

JULIA

I suppose you didn't mean what you said about Jack either—that he couldn't run? Well, I want you to know that I made him beat you today.

MAGPIE (*sings*)

She made him what he is today!

JULIA

Yes, and I can make him anything I want to—he doesn't sneer at my Psycho-analysis in the ignorant way you do!

[*Turns Right.*]

HOYT

Oh, now, listen, Julia—

JULIA (*sweetly, hoping he will*)

Of course I'll listen, Spike, if you want to apologize—

HOYT (*begins to do so*)

Well, now, Julia, you know I—

HUB (*mischievously*)

Of course, Julia will accept a public apology.

[HOYT *starts to speak.*]

PROFESSOR (*innocently*)

Of course—

[MAGPIE, HUB, JULIA, PROFESSOR, BETTY, PIERCE, *crowd closer, embarrassing* HOYT.]

MAGPIE

Better hurry up and make it, Hoyt—or John will come in here and throw you out!

HOYT (*losing his goat*)

Don't worry—I'm not going to apologize—you can just stick to that, Jack the Ripper, Julia—but you mark my words—some day he'll break out—and they'll find you all cut up in a trunk!

[*All laugh.* MAGPIE *goes up Right.*]

JULIA

And you're not going to apologize for that last remark?

HOYT (*angrily*)

No! I'm just going to go back to Wisconsin and

tell everybody that my girl rooted for Ohio and sold me out for this four-eyed murderer. So when you get back to school *you'd* better be ready to do a little apologizing yourself.

JULIA (*furious*)

Oh—had I? Well—I'll fool you! (*Turns to HUB.*)

Hub, you live here in Columbus, don't you?

HUB

Yes—

JULIA

You come with me—I want you to help me. (*Moves up C.*) And, when I come back you'll get a surprise, Mr. Hoyt.

[*Music stops. JULIA and HUB go up Left.*]

HOYT

Where's she going?

MAGPIE

Don't worry, Hoyt, she's a nice girl. She's going to get John to sock you in the jaw.

PROFESSOR

Hush—here he comes . . .

[HOYT starts L. HUB goes up, later joins JULIA.]

MAGPIE

Don't run away, Hoyt.

HOYT (*turning angrily*)

Who's running?

[JOHN enters C., from R., dressed in MAGPIE'S wide white trousers, tweed coat, foulard tie, and partially subdued cowlick. He still wears the glasses, but looks a great deal better.]

MAGPIE

Here he is!

PROFESSOR

Hail, John. . . .

MAGPIE

Doesn't he look wonderful, girls?

JOHN (*looking at pants*)

They feel kind of short.

REGGIE (*comes to JOHN's Left, with sandwiches*)

Oh, there's the hero.

MAGPIE

Yes, step up, girls, and meet my pants!

JOHN

Oh, say—

[REGGIE and BETTY dash up to him.]

MAGPIE

This is Betty Fair and Regina Hopper, Your Majesty.

REGGIE

Oh, just call me Reggie.

[*Shakes hands and smiles her best.*]

BETTY (*on his R., "horning in."*)

Oh, I'm just dying to meet you.

[REGGIE gets sandwiches on plate L. and offers them to JOHN.]

REGGIE (*to HUB*)

Oh, when I think you won the race, I could kiss you!

MAGPIE

Go ahead, don't mind me.

JOHN (*embarrassed*)

Oh, say—

[*The girls giggle.*]

BETTY

I will if you will, Reggie.

JOHN

Well—if you don't mind—I'd rather have a sandwich. (JOHN takes one in each hand.) I'm very pleased to meet you . . . both of you—

[Eats one sandwich in embarrassment, then other one.]

BETTY

Isn't he cute!

[Pinches his cheek and he hands her the sandwich.]

REGGIE retires with sandwiches down L.

MAGPIE

Don't you want to kiss him, Hoyt?

[JOHN moves R. of BETTY, alarmed at HOYT's presence.]

HOYT

Oh, shut up!

MAGPIE

Come on, John. Make a speech!

[JOHN shakes his head vigorously and indicates his mouth is full of sandwich. He swallows it. JOHN crosses D. and R. Stops short as he sees MARGIE, who enters.]

MARGIE (stops as she sees him. Comes to him, takes his hand)

Oh, hello, John—

JOHN (choking)

Hello, Margie—

MARGIE

What is it?

JOHN (swallows)

Peanut butter!

[Then stands smiling and holding her hand.]

MARGIE

Everybody's proud of you, John; I'm so happy, and look, there's the Gold Cup.

JOHN (*picks it up delighted*)

Oh, look! It has my name on it. Well, what do you think of that!

HOYT

I'll tell you what I think of it—

[JULIA *enters with* HUB. HOYT *sees* JULIA *and turns away.*

MAGPIE

Say, what have you two been up to?

JULIA

We've been telephoning. We've just been making some plans for Jack's future.

PIERCE (*up L.*)

You mean in athletics?

JULIA (*center*)

No—his real future—in business.

JOHN (*turning at piano*)

In *business!*

JULIA

Yes, in business—I don't mind telling you all that I have a very good reason to be *interested* in John's future. . . .

[*She smiles proudly, and pauses.* HOYT *pointedly takes a chair, turns his back and sits down at other side of room; lights a cigarette. Nudges and whispers from the group.*

PROFESSOR (*R. C.*)

Business? Why, John, I thought you were going to become a Professor?

HUB (*L. C.*)

How much does that pay!!

PROFESSOR (*smiling*)

About twelve hundred a year. . . .

JULIA

It's ridiculous to go to school for four years to learn how to make twelve hundred dollars.

PROFESSOR (*sensing that something is up*)

Well, of course if you want to *make money*, John—
(*Turns up stage. JOHN looks from one to the other, bewildered.*)

MAGPIE (*L. C.*)

Sure—get into *business!* I can get you a job in my brother's firm, selling advertising.

JOHN (*moves C.*)

But I don't know anything *about* advertising!

MAGPIE

That doesn't matter—neither does he.

[*JOHN looks unhappy.*]

HUB (*crossing MAGPIE, to C.*)

Never mind—I've fixed it. I'm going to get him a job with father as a *bond salesman!*

MAGPIE

What?

HUB (*proudly*)

A bond salesman!

JULIA (*to JOHN*)

Yes, that's more *unusual*.

[*HUB nods proudly.*]

MARGIE (*R.*)

But do you think John would like it?

JULIA (*crosses to JOHN*)

He can *learn* to like it! It's nicer than fooling with cactuses.

JOHN

That reminds me—

[*Removes cactus from pocket.*]

JULIA

Oh! He's got it in his pocket!

[*Retreats L.*]

JOHN

I wanted to discuss it with you, Professor.

[*Turns to PROFESSOR, R. C.*]

HUB (*interrupting—crosses to JOHN*)

And you couldn't go into a better field than selling bonds.

JOHN

You mean I would have to go around personally and sell them to people?

HUB

Sure!

JOHN

But how can you tell if they want any?

MAGPIE

Why, you give them a big red card—to hang out on the porch.

[*Sits on right arm of sofa.*]

JOHN

But I'm so busy working on my thesis in Botany.

JULIA

You'll have to give up your thesis in botany—because you start selling bonds *Monday*.

JOHN (*wildly*)

Monday?—why should I start Monday? What's the *hurry*?

JULIA

Well. . . that's my surprise. . .

[HOYT *cannot conceal his real interest.*

ALL

Oh! !

JULIA (*enjoying the sensation*)

Listen very carefully, Mr. Hoyt—after the dance is over, at midnight, you're all invited to our *wedding*!
[*Everybody gasps.*

ALL

Your wedding!

MARGIE (*faintly*)

Your wedding? Tonight?

JULIA

Yes.. At midnight.

JOHN (*turns to her desperately as realization grows*)

You don't mean this *coming* midnight?

JULIA

Yes dear.

HOYT (*down L., gulping*)

You're going to marry him *tonight*?

JULIA

Yes, Mr. Hoyt—I can't hurry it any *more*—just to please you.

[HOYT *snorts and turns away.*

MARGIE (*faintly*)

Didn't you know about it, John?

JOHN (*gulping*)

No. . . .

[*The group responds with giggles, etc.*

JULIA

He didn't know it was going to be so *soon*—that's the *surprise*.—Well, aren't you going to say something, Jack?

JOHN (*tries to laugh*)

Ha! ha . . . Yes—that was a surprise, all right!

HUB (*taking charge*)

We've made all the arrangements, John—it's all fixed! The license, and the minister, and everything. I phoned and arranged it with the license clerk.

JULIA

He was *so* nice.

HUB

Yes . . . he owes me money.

JULIA

And he's going to meet us with the license at the minister's—

[*She laughs, others join; JOHN tries to laugh.*]

JOHN (*weakly*)

What minister?

JULIA

He lives right across the street. (*Indicates off R.*)
He'll be ready at midnight.

JOHN

Oh, he won't want to stay up so late—

JULIA

It's all arranged. Now go and put on Magpie's tuxedo.

MAGPIE

Say, he's got my pants on now.

JULIA

And afterward Hub is going to drive us home.

JOHN

Home?

JULIA

To Zanesville, to Papa's.

JOHN

Oh, they won't be expecting—they might not have room for me.

JULIA

We can have *my* room, silly.

JOHN

Yes, but—*Oh!* (*Realizes.*) I'm used to so *much* room—I'm so restless—

[*Stops, terrified as he gets in deeper.*

HOYT (*steps forward furiously*)

Say, who do you think you're kidding?

JOHN (C.)

What?

HOYT (*stepping up to JOHN*)

So you didn't know anything about this wedding—it's all a surprise to you?

JOHN

Yes, it certainly is, Mr. Hoyt—

HOYT

Don't try to get friendly—you can't kid me.

PIERCE (*L. of HOYT. To HOYT, quietly*)

Now listen, Hoyt—calm down and behave yourself.

HOYT (*furiously*)

I am calm! (*Turns back to JOHN.*) But don't think you're fooling anybody with this innocent stuff!

JULIA

Oh, be still, Spike!

HOYT

I won't be still—for two cents I'd knock this bird

for a goal! (*Glares at JOHN.*) Crippled as I am. It wasn't enough for you to spike me so I can't walk—and to steal my girl from me.—No, you had to frame up a *surprise* here in front of everybody—so you could all have the laugh on me!

MAGPIE, HUB *and* PIERCE

Listen, Hoyt—we didn't intend—

JOHN (*stopping them*)

Honest—I didn't mean to do anything like that—

HOYT

You're a liar!

[*Glares at him, with chip on shoulder.*]

JOHN (*feeling he should do something about it*)

Say—don't you call me a liar.

HOYT

You're a *liar*—what are you going to do about it!

JOHN

Why, I suppose I ought to do *something*—

[*He starts to remove coat, feeling that it is expected of him . . . first taking off glasses. HOYT reaches out, and gives JOHN a slapping punch.*]

JULIA, BETTY *and* REGGIE

Oh—don't fight!

JOHN (*as boys grab HOYT*)

Hold him!

PIERCE

We have him.

JOHN

Have you got him?

BOYS

Yes!

JOHN

Thank you!



[Kicks HOYT. HOYT yells and in the excitement JOHN gets cactus from his pocket and slaps it on HOYT's leg.

HOYT (*removing cactus*)

Keep him away from me—I'm murdered!

[HUB holds JOHN.

JOHN

Let me at him!

[*Struggles.*

MAGPIE

Don't kick him again!

JOHN

I don't want to kick him. I want my cactus back!

HOYT (*limping up-stage*)

Take the damn thing. (*Throws it down.*) Right where he spiked me—I told you, Julia—! He's a murderer!

JULIA

It was your own fault—Oh, Spike—aren't you going to stay for the wedding?

HOYT (*giving her a look of pitiful rage*)

Oh—you just want to break my heart—you damned oilcan!

[*He limps off Center, boiling with indignation. All crowd around JOHN, congratulating and patting him on the back, etc.*

MAGPIE

Johnny, you're a fighting fool!

JULIA

And he did it all for me!

HUB

He fought for his woman and won her!

MAGPIE

The *worm* has *turned*!

[*Slaps JOHN on back.*

JOHN (*brandishing cactus*)

Did you say I was a worm?

MAGPIE

No!

[*Crosses Left.*

PROFESSOR (*down R., hastily*)

He meant it as a compliment, John.

JULIA

Now go and get ready, Jack.

JOHN (*crossing to her Center*)

Say listen—I can't get married so suddenly like this—

JULIA

Yes you can, Jack—now don't be bashful—we want to be congratulated—

BETTY and REGGIE (*rushing up excitedly*)

We want to celebrate. We want to tell the others!

[*Go out Center.*

MAGPIE (*up C.*)

You settled who's going to marry Julia—you are!

[MUSIC STARTS]

JULIA (*radiantly*)

And you can thank Spike Hoyt for this, Jack!

[*JULIA goes out with MAGPIE.*

HUB (*crosses R.*)

You can put on that Tuxedo yourself. We've only got about ten minutes. I must get my car ready.

JOHN (*dazed by the rush*)

Must you?

HUB

Remember the shirt buttons in front.

[*Goes out down R.*]

JOHN (*hopelessly*)

Will you excuse me— (*Goes up C., stops—turns to*
PROFESSOR) Professor, can I speak to you a minute
alone about—something?

PROFESSOR (*at piano with MARGIE*)

You haven't time, John—you must put on Magpie's
Tuxedo.

[*Comes to JOHN.*]

JOHN (*turns Center*)

I'm not going to. These pants are bad enough.

PROFESSOR

You must learn to be careful about your clothes
now, John. Your wife will insist on it.

JOHN (*dazed*)

Who?

PROFESSOR

Your wife.

JOHN (*pretty well sunk*)

Oh . . . yes.

[*Crosses L. C.*]

PROFESSOR (*burning it in*)

And you must be down bright and early to the
office every morning—to get that nice long list of
people to sell bonds to.—I did have a couple of new
specimens of confervæ I wanted to show you Mon-
day—but I suppose you won't have much time for
that now, eh?

JOHN

Oh—I'd love to see them!

PROFESSOR

But Julia is putting you to work Monday.

JOHN

Oh . . . yes. . . .

[*Moves left hopelessly.*]

PROFESSOR (*aside to MARGIE*)

Margie, "*precipitate*"!

MARGIE (*quickly*)

Are confervæ like algæ?

JOHN (*crossing to her. Eagerly*)

Yes, fresh-water plants—I hate to abandon my Algæ, Professor.

PROFESSOR (*up Center. Brusquely*)

Oh, you must forget all that—it takes a great deal of courage to be interested in Algæ nowadays, John—it's much better for you to be a bond salesman.

[FRESHMAN *enters from up L., comes down L. C.*]

FRESHMAN

Margie, may I have this dance?

MARGIE (*right*)

Well I . . .

JOHN (*R. C. Bravely*)

She and I are going to sit it out.

PROFESSOR (*exchanges a look with MARGIE*)

You can take me along, Norton. A male chaperon must work at his job.

[*Pushes FRESHMAN out, and follows.*]

FRESHMAN (*moving out*)

All right, sir.

[FRESHMAN and PROFESSOR *go out.*]

JOHN

I wish he had stayed here. I wanted to talk to him.

MARGIE

What about?

JOHN

Listen, you may as well know the truth about me, Margie—I'm no good.

[Crosses L. and sits on sofa.]

MARGIE

Oh, yes you are. Why, just look at what you've done today.

JOHN

I don't mean that. I mean *morally*. . . . Here I've got a chance to be everything I ever hoped for—and I don't *appreciate* it. I don't seem to *want* to be any good. Now, I know there's no money in being a professor, for instance, but I don't care! Now see—that isn't even *patriotic*! It's just *ridiculous*.

MARGIE

I don't think so. Most of the really great scientists have been like that, John.

JOHN

Oh, but, it isn't only about botany—that isn't the worst of it.

[Crosses R. C.]

MARGIE (*hopefully*)

Oh, is there something else?

JOHN (*slowly, looking away from her*)

Yes. I'm just beginning to realize it. . . . I know you'll despise me, but . . . well . . . that feeling I got this afternoon wasn't *right* either.

MARGIE

What feeling?

JOHN (*turning to her*)

In the tent—when you . . . remember I told you
I felt as if I was on wings or something?

MARGIE (*nodding that she remembers*)

Why wasn't it right?

JOHN (*looks front. Happily*)

Because . . . I got it again tonight.

MARGIE

When Julia told about the wedding?

JOHN (*face falls*)

No, I *lost* it then.

MARGIE (*softly*)

When did you get it, John?

JOHN (*softly and sincerely*)

When you came in and spoke to me.

MARGIE

When?

JOHN (*very sincerely*)

Just when I was eating that sandwich. I had my
mouth all full of peanut butter, but that feeling
came over me *just the same*.

MARGIE

Oh, John—

JOHN (*in despair*)

It seems things always happen to me when I'm eat-
ing—just like that noodle soup.

MARGIE

Oh, John—you dear *simple*—

JOHN (*hopelessly*)

I *knew* you would despise me.

MARGIE (*tenderly*)

I don't despise you, John. You're a dear boy—and
I'm going to tell Julia she has no right to—

JOHN

Oh, she knows what's best for me . . . she's analyzed me. I found out what some of the things mean that are wrong with me, and it was even worse than I thought. No. . . . I've got to go through with it. I sort of agreed to it—here in front of everybody.

MARGIE

Then we must say good-bye now.

JOHN (*nodding, with difficulty. Takes pin from lapel*)

I . . . I realize that *you* just . . . did that this afternoon to help me, for her sake—but would you let me give you something to keep?

[*She nods. He silently holds out his pledge pin.*]

MARGIE (*touched*)

Why, John, it's your pledge pin. Your Psi Sigma pledge pin!

JOHN (*trying to hide his emotion*)

I won't need it now—just put it away, in an old box or something . . . I'd rather *you'd* have it.

MARGIE

That pin is dearer to you than anything in the world, isn't it?

JOHN

Oh, yes . . . in a way. . . .

MARGIE

And you're giving it to me?

JOHN

Do you mind?

MARGIE (*takes pin, keeps his hand*)

I'll keep it . . . always.

[*She holds his hand against her face, kisses it quickly and lets it go. Starts up toward hall.*]

[MUSIC STOPS]

JOHN (*stands dazed, holding hand as she left it; speaks suddenly*)

I'm gonna POSTPONE that wedding!

MARGIE (*startled*)

No, you can't do that, John.

JOHN (*in great emotional excitement*)

Yes, I can. Until the first of the week anyhow—my mother will be here then and she can tell me what to do. (*Moves up R.*) That minister is right across the street—I'll go over and tell him to go to hell—go to bed. You come with me!

MARGIE (*holding his arm*)

No, John. There's no good in postponing it. You've got to make up your mind now to be one kind of person or the other. It will be easier for you to be Julia's kind—you'll have her to help you.

JOHN (*in desperation*)

Why do I have to amount to anything, if I don't want to? Can't I just be myself?

MARGIE (*eagerly*)

Yes—but nobody can help you decide, John. You'll have to do that alone.

[JULIA enters with HOYT. HUB and MAGPIE and others follow.]

JULIA (*L. C. with HOYT*)

Where have you two been?

MARGIE (*L. of JOHN*)

Why we—that is he—er—

JOHN (*R. C. at end of piano*)

Well where have *you* two been?

JULIA

Why, we—that is he—Spike and I were just dancing—we were waiting for *you*.

HOYT (*steps forward, remembering his limp*)

I'll tell him, Julia. . . .

JOHN (*desperately. Steps Center with a new manner*)

No you won't! From now on nobody is going to tell me anything!

MAGPIE (*L. end of sofa*)

What?

JOHN (*removing coat*)

Here's your coat, Hub—

HOYT (*edging away*)

Now wait—don't let him start on me again—

JOHN (*fiercely*)

Shut up—Magpie, I'll give you the pants later—

(*Turns to HUB*) And I won't need you to drive me to Zanesville tonight, Hub—

HUB (*down L. C. below sofa*)

All right—but what's the idea?

JOHN

And I won't be there to work Monday, either—I'm not going to dress up, or slick down my hair . . . or *sell bonds*.

PROFESSOR (*appearing up Center*)

What's the matter, John?

JULIA (*L. C.*)

Yes, for Heaven's sake . . . !

JOHN

You all are trying to make me *amount to something*, like you do—well I can't—I'm inferior—and doggone it, I'm gonna *be* inferior. I'm going to be a professor, whether it's immoral or not. (*Crosses*

to MARGIE, *turns back, faces JULIA.*) And what's more, I'm going to be a *darned good* professor.

HUB

But you can't, old man, Julia won't stand for it!

JOHN

Julia has nothing to do with it.

HOYT

She hasn't? Why, I thought—

MAGPIE

But she's going to marry you!

JOHN

I'd like to see her try it—she'd be a bigamist.

HUB *and* JULIA

What?

JOHN

I am married.

ALL OF THEM

What? What's that? etc.

MARGIE

What?

JOHN (*wildly*)

Yes, to her. (*Nudges MARGIE*) Aren't we?

MARGIE

Huh? (*As JOHN nudges her again*) Yes—he just made me do it. . . .

JULIA

I don't believe it. It isn't true.

JOHN (*after an instant*)

Well, she's my wife in the sight of Heaven, anyway!

JULIA

What!

JOHN

Yes—it *happened this afternoon*—in the tent!*[All gasp and exclaim. JOHN is suddenly horrified as he realizes what they think.]*

JULIA

What did?

MARGIE

I kissed him!

[General relief.]

JOHN

Well—I didn't *resist* her!PROFESSOR (*slaps JOHN on back*)Dear, dear—this is *terrible*!

JOHN

I know it, but that's the way *I am*! I'm an *immoral introvert*!

JULIA

You're a *what*?

JOHN

Oh, I found out what those words mean—you were trying to bring out my evil nature! Well, you did, all right—come on, Margie, now we *will* get married!

MARGIE

Oh, we can't get married like this!

JULIA

I should hope not!

HUB and MAGPIE

No.

JOHN (*shouting*)Why can't we! Shut up, all of you!—There's nothing too bad for me to do now! I can *get married*

or anything! (*Turns to JULIA defiantly.*) My *Libido* is turned *outward!*

[*Goes out Right, with MARGIE, walking in heroic strides, as*

The Curtain Falls.

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